



J. de Ribera pinx.

Prado, Madrid

"This is my beloved Son"
(Mt. 3. 17).

*"He that hath seen me
hath seen the Father"*
(Jn. 14. 9).

*"The Spirit of his Son . . .
crying, Abba, Father"*
(Gal. 4. 6).

The Suffering God

*A Few Subjective Meditations on the
Highest Objective Reality*

By
ERLING EIDEM

*Brethren, I speak after the
manner of men (Gal. 3. 15).*

Translated by
S. G. HÄGGLUND

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DOMINE DEUS...QUÆCUMQUE
DIXI IN HOC LIBRO DE TUO,
AGNOScant ET TUI; SI QUA DE
MEO, ET TU IGNOSCE ET TUI.

*May everything in this treatise that comes
from Thee, O Lord my God, be recognized
and acknowledged also by those who belong
to Thee; and may that which comes from
myself alone find Thy forgiveness, as well
as that of those who are Thine own.*

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HONORABLE READER, into whose hands these meditations may come: I have a request to make of you, nay, an earnest petition. I know, of course, that I can not compel you to do as I desire and that I scarcely have the right to request so much of you as I am about to do. I ask you kindly to judge these lines from the point of view from which they are written, that is, that you do not apply to them any measurement that is foreign to their innermost spirit.

If you are unwilling or unable to grant this request, I shall be more thankful to you than I can say—though it may seem rather strange or, perchance, impertinent to make such a request at the very beginning—if you will leave this little volume unread and at once place it on your bookshelf with other books that you have not deemed worth reading. I assume that you have more than one of that kind already.

You will find in these pages no dogmatic arguments scientifically developed. For

such I have not the requisite theoretical training, nor—if I shall be entirely frank, as I want to be and, so far as I am able, try to be—does my disposition lead me in that direction.

You will find here no polemics directed either toward the right or toward the left. Should you discern a *polemos* here and there, a conflict between different thoughts or ways of thinking, then this is, at least in the main, a stressing of these in my own consciousness. You must not, therefore, suppose that I am aiming at this or that conception. I can sincerely assure you that such an interpretation of my words would be wrong and misleading. It is not my purpose to add any new theory to the many that have already been presented, least of all with any claim whatsoever that what I am about to present should crowd out or be substituted for the experiences of others and the doctrines they have built thereon.

Nor will you find any general religious-historical elucidation of the theme before us. The saviour characters of antiquity—Adonis, Attis, Mithra, and all the others—

have been left in the shadow, and the one Saviour, Jesus Christ, has been made pre-eminent.

And it should here be added that I have deliberately omitted all study of old and new literature dealing with the subject in question—a fact easily discerned by those who are well informed. I have done this not because of any disrespect for what has been said by others, whose thought may have been far clearer, deeper, and more fervent than my own. The motive for this omission lies entirely in the sense of my own weakness. If I were to have taken cognizance of what others have thought and written, it would have involved a real danger—I know myself well enough to be aware of this—the danger of involving myself in an extensive discussion for which I am fundamentally not qualified.

That which I have written is, therefore, not a polemical treatise, nor the result of any learned or historical investigation. I would rather characterize it as a sermon, though I am not entirely satisfied with that name either. For even though the purely

religious point of view—the devotional, you might say—has been the impelling one in my writing, it would not, if I know my own mind, occur to me to present so subjective or, to put it plainly, so one-sided a testimony before a congregation of Christian worshipers.

It may perhaps be best to use the term “religious meditations” to express the purport and content of my little book, though even that designation is in a way too fine. There is really only one thought, and that a most delicate one, which lies at the basis of this treatise, even though other meditations are woven around it. I can compare that thought with the undertone or, better still, with the timbre or tonal quality of a noble old string instrument. It is extraordinarily difficult to describe this. And if one is by nature inclined to be critical, he fears lest, while listening intently and even more afterward when attempting to describe what was heard, he might add finer and brighter shadings of tone than his ears have really apprehended.

You must not, noble reader, get impatient

with me from the very beginning for enlarging thus upon my intent and interest in the lines that follow. A long introduction to a short treatise does indeed seem like a big watery head on a small and shriveled body. But it is of utmost importance to me, as I have already said, first to bring you to the point of view from which I am viewing the matter before us. And please do not take offense at my form of address, which is rather more intimate than is customary, and perhaps more intimate than is really permissible.

THE ONE delicate thought which I shall dwell on in these meditations, as well as the background against which it should be considered, finds expression in a legendary description pertaining to the time of Papias, the aged bishop of Hierapolis, who lived in the first half of the second century. I have not found this story in any collection of *acta* from ancient church history nor in any manuscript of impressive age. Judging from internal evidence—historical misstatements, inaccurate chronology, fantastic depicting of details, etc.—the story referred to is unquestionably of very recent origin, though it tries, with evident intention, to clothe itself in a somewhat ancient style. For my purpose, however, which is not historical, but purely illustrative, it may serve well enough. It reads as follows.

* * *

It came to pass at that time that some brethren from Judaea came to our city, Hierapolis. Being tired from their journey-

ing, they asked that they might be brought to Papias, our venerable father in Christ. Papias was a man who was given to hospitality, and he received them with gladness. When he had provided for the washing of their feet and had set food before them, he inquired of them, saying, "My brethren, from whence are you come?" They answered, "We have come from Jerusalem and bring you a greeting from the saints there."

And since they were very old, Papias made further inquiry of them, asking whether they themselves had seen the Lord, and whether they had any word from Him to impart. For Papias, our father, had determined to write an extensive and thorough treatise concerning all the words of our Lord, Who is to be praised and adored for ever. He wished very much, therefore, to learn to know those who had been eye-witnesses from the beginning, as well as other ministers of the gospel who had been instructed by them, in order that he might thus obtain a reliable insight into all that the Lord had said and taught.

Now when Papias put this question to them—as was his wont whenever a brother from Judaea came to him—the one who appeared to be the younger of the two and who had given his name as John made answer and said, “My father, I myself never saw the Lord during His days in the flesh, but I often heard from the apostles whom He had chosen, and especially from the disciple whom Jesus loved and whom you doubtless also knew, many of the gracious words from His mouth, and concerning the mighty deeds He wrought both in Galilee and in the Holy City.” Thereupon he told, in many words, of all that Jesus had done and taught.

Papias rejoiced greatly over what he heard and thanked God for graciously guiding the steps of this disciple so that he had come under his roof. For it seemed to him as though he had unaware received an angel as his guest. The rest of us who were seated in the house also took great delight, together with our venerable father, in all that we heard, and I think we shall never forget it.

Since the evening was now far spent and

it was time to retire, Papias turned to the elder of the two brethren from Judaea, for like the rest of us Papias had until now scarcely noticed that he had been sitting silent all the while. We were all so engrossed in the words which were spoken by the brother John.

But now that he had finished his discourse, Papias turned his eyes, which before he had kept fixed continuously upon the speaker, to the others who were present, and then noticed this other disciple. He was astonished and displeased to find that this man had been sitting there all the while in silence, neither answering the questions which he had put, nor taking any part in the conversation which had so greatly refreshed his own heart.

Papias therefore spoke to him, saying, “My brother, what is your name, and where do you hail from? You have not told us. Why have you been sitting here in utter silence, speaking never a word? Why have you, who are older and have probably seen more, let your brother do all the speaking? Or may it be that you have not heard any-

thing about our Lord, much less seen Him? Surely you do not consider what your brother has told us to be of small or questionable value."

Then this elder disciple, who had not yet made known his name, made answer and said, "My father, my name is of small consequence. If you want to name me, just say, 'The Disciple Who Loved Jesus.' I am fully aware, of course, that you, father, and all the rest of you love the Lord, and that the name I have taken for myself therefore belongs in like manner to you all. I was born in Galilee, in an insignificant village far from the great thoroughfare. Later, Jerusalem, our fathers' city, became my home, though not until after the Lord had entered into His glory."

Thereupon he became silent and sat motionless and apparently lost in deep thought for a long while. Neither Papias nor any of the rest of us dared to interrupt this silence, for it seemed to us to be a holy quiet in the presence of God.

Finally, "The Disciple Who Loved Jesus" resumed his discourse, speaking slowly

and with a very gentle voice. "Brother John has spoken well," he said. "I, too, heard these same things from those who knew the Lord while He lived among us on the earth, and I am sure that their testimony is true. I have nothing to add."

Here he made a short pause—it seemed to us who were present as if he were engaged in silent prayer—and then he continued, hesitatingly and as if it were against his will, almost indeed as if it concerned a secret which he was loath to reveal, "You are asking me, O Papias, if with mine own eyes I have seen the Lord, and if I have heard any words from His mouth. Know then, venerable father, that such grace was actually granted me by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The words I heard from His lips are, however, already well known. You have heard them from other disciples of the Lord, from those who followed Him from the day when He was baptized by John to the day when He was received up and was parted from us—and I do not belong to these chosen ones. Why should I take up the time to tell you what

I saw—it was in fact so little—when the treatise which you are to write will, as I have heard, deal with the words of the Lord and of nothing else? However, at your request, and in order that you may not think that my silence was due to a perverted heart of mastering unbelief, I shall tell you how I, on my part, saw the Lord.

“I, even I who now sit in your midst bent and gray, was scarcely more than a boy when our Lord went about in the towns and villages of my homeland and proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. Many of my people hailed Him as a prophet, and some even greeted Him as the Messiah who had been promised to our fathers.

“On one occasion He came also to the out-of-the-way town where I lived. Though a child’s mind is taken up with things before its eyes, and though its thoughts are childish, I nevertheless understood that He was something more than our ordinary scribes. I still remember distinctly that I heard the Lord tell us who lived there a parable about an old man who had two sons, one of whom became a prodigal son

who returned home again only after he had wasted his share of his father’s wealth in drunkenness and licentiousness. I do not remember having heard any other word from the Lord at that time. A child so easily forgets.

“Now I shall tell you of the other time that I saw the Lord. It was a few years later. I was then growing up into young manhood. My father had brought me with him up to Jerusalem to eat the passover according to the custom of our fathers. It was the very year in which our Lord suffered and died in the Holy City.

“My parents had gone out to visit kinsmen and friends and had left me alone in the inn. I then slipped out alone and came to a place known as ‘The Skull,’ just outside the city wall. I saw great multitudes of people hurrying out that way, and I followed them, filled with amazement at the sight and wondering what it might all mean. There in the distance I saw three crosses, and on the middle cross I saw suspended a man whom I recognized as the one whom in our home we used to call ‘the prophet

from Nazareth,' but who was far more than any prophet, even the Son of the Most High, our Lord.

"I did not dare to press any nearer, but stood in the far distance behind a little group which held itself aloof from the Roman soldiers, our councillors, and the howling multitudes. Nor did I dare to remain there very long, since I was afraid that my parents would return and not find me at home. While I stood there and beheld that which transpired, I heard no word from His lips, and I can therefore, as I have said, make no contribution to your investigations, O Papias. I can neither question nor affirm what other trustworthy men have told you, though I am sure that you will make no mistake in granting them your confidence.

"I did not, indeed, see very much as I stood at a great distance and my eyes are by nature weak. But *one* thing I did see—I saw Him that was crucified and who suffered in our behalf, though I did not then understand that mystery, look over the heads of the multitude and fix his eye upon me

for a moment. I am perfectly sure of this, venerable father: He fixed His eyes upon me, and none other.

"I have never since that day been able to forget that look. It has followed me through life. There was in that look no anger whatsoever toward our people and those who had aided them in bringing Him to the cross. Nor did it give expression to the physical pain which our crucified Lord must then have suffered nor to the anguish and despair of soul which He must have felt, whereof others have spoken who stood longer at the cross and were nearer to it than I. That look was filled to the brim with the suffering of grief, the grief that loves and seeks until the heart is ready to break.

"When I met that look from Him who hung there on the cross with outstretched arms, it seemed to me that I had seen that look once before. I did not then understand this, but later, when I had been called to be one of His holy and chosen ones and had learned to put my hope and trust in the only-begotten Son, our Lord, I realized

where it was I had previously seen that look. Just as the Lord, with His arms outstretched, had looked upon me from the cross, so had that aged father appeared when in loving pity for his son he spread out his arms and hurried to meet the returning prodigal. It was that sorrowful and forgiving father, the one whom the Lord in His parable had depicted with such living color that I seemed to behold him with my physical eyes—it was this father whom I now beheld in the crucified Lord himself.

“And as often as I hear my dear brother John relate that which he has learned from his teacher John, who was one of the Twelve, how the Lord on the night in which He was betrayed said to Philip, ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,’ then I always remember how the Lord looked upon me that time, and I say in my heart, ‘Yea, verily, he that hath seen Thee, O Lord, hath seen the Father.’”

After a brief moment of silence the aged disciple, who until now had been speaking with his face turned toward our bishop, directed his words to the companion at his

side and said, “What do you think of what I have just said, my dear brother John? Have I, perchance, deceived myself? Has no one else said the same? Did I stand too far away from the cross, or were my eyes too weak to see and apprehend anything correctly? Is it, perhaps, all something that I have imagined?”

John did not immediately answer the questions put to him, but sat there immersed in deep thought. The rest of us were filled with uncertainty, wondering whether he would confirm or contradict what his friend had said.

Then the elder man suddenly laid his hand quietly upon his friend’s shoulder and said, “You need not answer, my dear brother. I desire to hear neither a yes nor a no from you. I know that we agree in one thing, that everything depends on whether a man loves the Lord or not. Let that be enough.” With that he grew silent.

And inasmuch as Papias and the rest of us did not wish to grieve the aged man by questioning his testimony, nor desired to lead the conversation into some other

channel—for our thoughts were occupied with what the unnamed disciple had said—we went each one to his place of rest.

* * *

I have related this apocryphal Papias-legend in unabridged form, in spite of the evident disproportion of its structure and in spite of its verbosity, which might have suggested numerous eliminations. But inasmuch as Papias, according to the unanimous verdict of church history, was a man of very ordinary gifts and of an overstrained imagination, it seems fitting in a way that a story connected with his name should reveal traces neither of literary talent nor of a responsible sense of reality.

To clarify at least to some extent, by means of a picture, the thought which the legendary story seeks to convey, there appears as frontispiece in this book a reproduction of a painting representing the Trinity by the Spanish-Italian artist de Ribera, which hangs in the Prado Museum in Madrid. Critics have called attention to the contrast between the Saviour's body, stretched out and cramped in death, and the

indescribable expression of eternal peace in the countenance of the Father. But does not this peace reach out over unsearchable depths? Is it not like the peace of an aged person who has loved much and suffered much?

I HAVE OFTEN wondered what might be the chief underlying reason why those who are to speak on some religious topic, whether what they say is to be merely extempore remarks or a prepared address, with such surprising frequency choose as the point of departure for their discussion and even as its main substance some portion of Scripture, preferably a clear-cut and pregnant or strikingly descriptive passage which might arouse more or less vivid mental associations. The occasions when a speaker formulates his introduction without such aid are, at least as far as my observation goes, quite exceptional.

For the ordinary sermons in the churches the matter is of course settled by the Scriptural texts that have been assigned or by some similar ruling. But why does not the speaker, when he has opportunity to do so, free himself from such dependence on a Biblical text? Is it merely habit or routine or, to choose a finer and probably also a

truer expression, an esthetic-religious style which is rooted in an ancient mode of sermonizing which, as we know, goes back to pre-Christian times and has its roots in Jewish as well as Hellenic soil?

The pre-Christian ancestry of discourses thus dependent on texts in itself tends to make us cautious when we give the matter closer consideration. The Stoic expositions of Homeric texts seem to us rather suspicious, to say the least, and the violent yet at the same time altogether too literal interpretations of Jewish scribes seem to us by no means ideal. We become all the more hesitant when we consider that our Lord, so far as we can judge from the gospel story, never used Biblical texts as bases for His discourses outside of the synagogues. And we recollect how incomparably fresh, like sparkling dewdrops, and at the same time how realistic His preaching was. We are painfully aware of how far distant the "old proclamation," the message of great joy delivered by the first and greatest Herald, is from the "new," as presented by all schools and shadings of theology.

Are not our text-dependent discourses, especially when they are so dominating as they are, to be considered as the altogether too legitimate offspring of ancient rabbinism? Are we bound by fetters of tradition, by a new law, by a testament that is new and yet of the same intrinsic nature as the old, and must we as soon as possible free ourselves from these fetters in order that there shall be more life and reality in our words? I am not, of course, so utterly naive as to suppose that a speaker's independence of a Biblical text would in itself bring about such great results. But it might be supposed that such freedom would challenge and release a more individual and personal testimony, a more original and mature discourse. For my part, I am really of the opinion that it would be profitable for some religious speakers if they would now and then attempt to speak without reference to some Biblical text. They would thereby find out whether this method might help them to speak with greater freedom and to come into more intimate contact with reality and with life.

For myself I must confess that as time passes, my experience, though I can not boast of any considerable amount of experience, has convinced me that it is for *me* the most natural and best method to tie up with a word of Scripture in the old-fashioned way. Just as the temple, at least in my case, provides a more quiet and sacred and less distracting atmosphere for prayer—and I must deplore that for our prayer life we have largely become estranged from the sanctuary, though I fully recognize that our heavenly Father has no preference for those who worship Him on Gerizim or in Jerusalem rather than elsewhere—so the Bible is for me a high-vaulted temple in which there is holy stillness and where everything, both the structural parts and the ornamentation, is full of rich symbolical significance.

It is quite natural for me to go there for inspiration. It may be an evidence of poverty. Indeed, in my case and perhaps also in the case of others, it is such an evidence. But he that is poor must not be too proud to go to those that are richer than he and ask for aid. And there can be no doubt

but that the prophets and apostles are in spiritual strength considerably richer than I. Of this I find assurance daily as I become absorbed in their writings.

This has been my present experience also as I have sought to bring into clear consciousness for myself and to express in words the thought that is here to engage our attention. Scriptural passages crowd upon me, shaping and determining my thought. Nor can I now any more than at other times feel that this is a constraint or fetter, or implies any bias. These Biblical phrases have on the contrary been both plastic and fruitful means of stimulation and expression. They have set my thoughts in motion and have helped to fashion them. My thinking has thus in a way become a Biblical meditation.

May I then, like the ancient Philo Judaeus, begin with a portion of early Bible history. Philo's exegetical art is no longer held in high repute, and this with good reason, but let me nevertheless attempt an exposition *a la* Philo of an old Scriptural passage—if indeed my treatise deserves to

be called an exposition. Otherwise I shall have to share the fate of the great Alexandrian. At any rate I shall be in fine and honorable company.

In Genesis 6. 5, 6 we read the following words:

“And Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

I do not think it need necessarily depend on any sermonizing sentimentalism if one feels profoundly touched by the words, “It repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

This is the first time in the Bible that we find any description of God's inward state of mind or of His personal feelings. To use a Greek expression from the field of art, we are accustomed to call this anthropopathy, that is to say, we attribute human feelings and emotions to God.

In the creation story (Gen. 1. 1—2. 4),

taken from the so-called priestly document, God appears as the exalted sovereign who, surrounded by His regal court, needs but speak a word and His will is executed unconditionally. The Creator finds everything that He has made very good (1. 31), but nothing is said expressly concerning His inner satisfaction and pleasure in His work.

In the so-called Jahvistic story of the creation (Gen. 2. 4 ff.), God appears with the traits of a mighty and thoughtful and provident landlord.

In the story of the fall (3. 1 ff.), God appears as a stern and just judge who pronounces His sentences with the utmost objectivity. Nothing is said, however, about any anger or grief in his heart. In like manner does He appear in the story of Cain's crime and its consequences (4. 1).

But now, looking back upon the life and manner of living of primordial humanity, we meet with the first expression of anthropathy: "It repented Jehovah . . . and it grieved him at his heart."

Ancient and modern rationalism — the term rationalism being used here not in

the sense of any definite trend or school of thought, and thus without containing any value judgment—has very naturally taken offense at the expression "It repented Jehovah," and has found it impossible to harmonize any such trait with a logical, rationally satisfying conception of God. Truly, no conception of God, at least no living one, can be so formulated that it is not open to attack by thought. But it should be freely conceded that the idea of God's repentance is from a religious point of view relatively dispensable and needlessly irrational.

The Bible itself contains well known expressions which militate against the idea of repentance as applicable to God; for example, "God is not a man, that he should lie, neither the son of a man, that he should repent" (Num. 23. 19), and "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent; for he is not a man, that he should repent" (1 Sam. 15. 29). This over against numerous familiar places where we read of the repentance of God.

In our day it is customary at once to re-

sort to that religious-historical charm-word "primitivism," and make its clumsy and coarsely sensuous conceptions explanatory of such thoughts and expressions. When one has become thus possessed, everything is clear and satisfactory. Indeed, the naively primitive worshiper is given a friendly and sympathetic commendation for his "Urwüchsigkeit," his freshness untouched by culture.

I fear that "God's grief" will be dismissed as readily as His "repentance," and yet it is this thought of God's grief that I would like to underscore as emphatically as possible in these meditations as a genuine and inalienable human conception of God. "It grieved him at his heart"—this is, according to my way of looking at it, the primary description, to be understood in its real, literal sense—to the extent, namely, that any human formula concerning the divine realities can be thus understood. The words, "It repented Jehovah," add an illustrative meaning. The human conception is clarified by something altogether too human, in order

that the description might thereby gain more life and intensity. I am of course fully aware that the ancient author intended his words about God's "repentance" to be taken quite as literally as the words concerning His "grief," but we are not here occupied with any historically exact interpretation but rather, as has been said, with a Biblical meditation.

The word "repentance" seems to me to be a most vivid expression for the inner state of agitation in God. It is just as when a bereaved human being, beset by an extraordinary sorrow, can, by reason of his instinct of self-preservation, wish that everything that has led up to this point were something undone, unreal, thereby to ward off the perception of violent pain. A human being can experience sorrow thus intensely.

It is evident that we must not in such a case think of repentance in an ethical-religious sense. In this latter sense, repentance implies something else and something more than the mere wish that something were undone. It then implies a desire to be more firmly planted than before in the

ethical-religious and ultimate foundation which is God.

So far as I am able rightly to analyze the mental process which we call religious repentance, this implies essentially that the repentant one desires, not only to blot out and remove from the moral consciousness of God and himself a greater or lesser series of acts, a longer or shorter period of life, so that the present moment might articulate immediately with a point in the past and imply, as it were, a repetition of it; the longings of one who is repentant reach farther and higher than to such a *status quo ante*.

The pangs of repentance imply also a burning desire to come nearer to God than before. The very feeling of distance from God becomes an urge toward God. It is precisely because repentance has such a content, though one may not always be conscious of it, that the correctness of speaking of repentance as implying faith becomes evident—as well as of faith implying something of repentance—though we reject the ancient dogmatic conception of repentance

as something preceding faith as a not entirely exact description of the real process. Repentance without some measure of faith is not religious repentance, that is, "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7. 9, 10). No, it is despair.

Our passage from Genesis must, of course, not be associated with the religious-ethical conception of repentance. It is evident that we are here concerned with the state of mind of one who views an unsuccessful undertaking, a failure for which he bears no guilt—at least not all the guilt—but where other factors have entered in and brought about the unsuccessful result. This altogether too human view of man's freedom as entering into and thwarting God's plan with the world was no doubt in the mind of the ancient author. We can not accept it in this form, but I think, as has been said, that it may be employed to the extent that we see its significance as lying in the strong, colorful and concrete setting which it gives to the indispensable thought of God's grief over the lost condition of human beings whom He had created.

For this grief need not be defined as

involving a painful feeling of remorse because of the failure of one's plan, a feeling which, as it were, compels one to make a new beginning, but can be conceived, essentially, as a heartfelt, sympathizing sorrow over human beings in their unhappy condition.

To me the words, "It grieved him at his heart," become a superscription brimful of meaning, yes, more than that, an essential point of view—though assuredly not the only one—for a religious meditation on human history in general. I attach no special importance to the occurrence of the words at this particular place in Genesis. They are applicable in like degree to the entire history of the world as far back as we can trace it, back, indeed, to the point where a human heart first perceived the conflict between good and evil.

THE IDEA of God as experiencing grief is one of the many possible anthropopathic conceptions which a living piety, by a sort of inner necessity, resorts to in giving expression to God's attitude toward evil. The thought of God's negative, rejective relation to evil can by no means be dismissed from our conception of God, if we shall at all conceive of this object of our religious faith as ethically qualified. Even the least compromising of this fundamental prerequisite will in its consequences lead, so far as I can see, downward toward a naturalistic conception of God.

But the more positive aspect of God's reaction against sin can, of course, be described in many different, more or less rational ways. I am in no way sufficiently well trained in the school of pure thinking to venture upon an exclusively rational or even mainly logical investigation of this question. I shall instead restrict myself to an examination, one by one, of a few dif-

ferent expressions by which piety, or the more popular conception, has chosen to characterize this reaction.

It will be mainly, one might say, a review of the terms and conceptions related to our subject and a testing of their different values. And the main point of view from which this evaluation shall be made will be the respective relationships of these expressions to things innermost and highest in personal life.

It is natural—at all events it seems to be a fact—that by far the most of these current terms and images have grown out of the sacred original documents of revealed religion, Jewish as well as Christian. For my part, I am fully convinced that this is by no means accidental nor simply a token and an evidence of spiritual indolence on the part of latter-day Christendom and of its total lack of creative power. Indeed, I do not believe in the *possibility* of an entirely new coinage of religious terms—for the human means of expression are rather narrowly limited—nor in the *need* of such a new-made religious coinage in order that

the Christian religion shall be able to show its power in our own time.

That which, according to my conception, is much more needful than new terms is a persistent vivifying and a positive presentation and fashioning of that which is fundamental and central in the historic means of expression for our Christian faith, together with a strongly emphasized concentration upon its essential and sustaining characteristics.

Surely, no man in our day, at least no one who has any power of historical perception, can misunderstand or take offense at the expressions for God's reaction against evil that are markedly anthropomorphic and anthropopathic in nature or that are borrowed from the outer, sensuous world, such as are found in many places in the Old Testament and also, though in a degree quantitatively and qualitatively less frequent, in the New Testament. We refer, by way of example, to the following expressions: "Jehovah will roar from Zion" (Am. 1. 2; Jer. 25. 30; Hos. 11. 10; Joel 3. 16); "the blast

of thy nostrils" (Ex. 15. 23); "because he was wroth" (2 Sam. 22. 8).

We find nothing offensive in such phrases, but recognize in them traces of a naive yet genuine conception of God or else, as in other cases, of poetic imagery. We even feel pleasurably touched by them by reason of the realism and tangibility, the intensity and violence, the splendor and solemnity, which dwell in them. But we also realize, of course, that such expressions are by no means adequate to convey our faith-concepts concerning God, when He appears before us in His truest and loftiest form as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we would scarcely use such means of representation to formulate the deepest experiences of our religious life or of our religious view of the world.

If we should look at a few of the commonest terms which the current devotional literature has taken from the Bible as signifying God's aversion to evil, we might first recollect that sin is characterized as an "abomination" before God. This expression occurs primarily in the Old Testament, and

there rather frequently, for example, in Lev. 18. 22; Ps. 5. 6; Prov. 3. 32, and often elsewhere in Proverbs, and in Ezekiel. In the New Testament, we may refer to Lk. 16. 5 and Tit. 1. 16.

The word "abomination" represents two Hebrew words of different roots and seems to have been used originally with reference to the worshiping of other gods than Jehovah and to belong in the sphere of religious cult. The word represents the divine reaction against evil; it is as if the Deity were in some way annoyed and unpleasantly affected thereby. Just as the stench of something in a state of decay or the sight of something foul is offensive to a person. One desires to close his nostrils or shut his eyes and run away from it. One shuns and loathes it.

Consequently, there lies in this word something primarily passive, an element that is not a manifestation of will but preponderatingly ethical in character.—Something similar can be said of the related expression, "Forty years long was I grieved with that generation" (Ps. 95. 6).

So much the more pronounced is the intractably active sound of other expressions which, in manifold variations, are commonly used to represent God's relation to evil, as, for example, that He is "provoked," "wroth," etc., or, from man's side, one "provokes," "offends," "mocks" God. This thought and these expressions are well known and familiar to us, for they occur, not only in the two great divisions of the Bible, but also in current religious speech.

The Israelite of old conceived of and perceived this wrath of God as an aversion of strongly emotional character. How vivid his conception of this aversion on God's part was becomes apparent in expressions and phrases such as these: God's wrath was "kindled," "glows," "burns," "smokes," "is poured out." God's whole being can issue in this "flame": "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12. 29; Dt. 4. 24). But this incomparably intense feeling of God's displeasure and aversion to sin is indeed by no means limited to men in times long since passed. There are assuredly many, even up to the moment when you, my

dear reader, are perusing these lines, who in times of religious crisis experience with fearful earnestness God's judgment upon, that is, God's reaction against, their own personal sin. On the whole, I think it is a mistake to raise impassable barriers and distances between men of antiquity and ourselves, who live in this much praised and enlightened day.

Not without reason we may, however, ask ourselves whether the thought of an angry God means so much now and is of such central importance even in the present religious crises as it was, for example, to Luther—to choose only one, but that a classical example. For my own part, I must honestly admit that the thought of an angry God neither has had nor has today such a dominating place in my religious life. And I have heard the same confession from others, whom I consider to be brothers in Christ, stronger and more authoritative than I.

What is the reason for this? In the first place one is apt to think of the often lamented and indeed very evident lack in our day of a religious sense of guilt. That the

feeling of guilt on the part of those who are on the way to the kingdom of God—for I am now thinking only of such—has in general decidedly diminished in intensity, is something that neither can nor should be denied, even if, on the other hand, it is certain that not a few among us are quite evidently fearful, or perhaps we should say considerate, about using the time-honored strong expressions because we are less given to accepting a traditional pattern or, in other words, because of a certain commendable honesty and love of truth. One is unwilling to use formulations inherited from the fathers in an attempt by suggestion to arouse emotions, since such artificial feelings could not really be genuine.

A sincere and real sense of guilt is, however, not altogether wanting among our contemporaries. It appears unmistakably in that ardent and sincere longing for a deepened consciousness of one's own sinfulness which we often meet with, and that not only among religious people of an older type, but also among those who are more modern, that is to say, those who voluntarily or in-

voluntarily, with joy or with sighing, stand in closer touch with modern cultural life. For my own part, in order to create and strengthen such an indispensable knowledge of self, I am wont to apply two points of view which in my experience have proven to be pedagogically effective, namely, that of omission and that of totality.

My sin appears to me as an abomination to God, not least when I consider all the innumerable words, thoughts, and deeds of love which I have *neglected* to say, think, and do. I then feel poor, yes, utterly impoverished within. I must acknowledge a lack within me, deep as the abyss, an infinite negativity. This is the one point of view. (Compare the important category of "spiritual poverty" in Schartau's *ordo salutis*.)

The second point of view which lends itself in a genuine and true way to making the consciousness of guilt a living experience within me is the thought of the very continuity of evil in my life. The concrete cases of transgression and omission—these dismal memories—I bring before my mind in order that I may thus get a living im-

pression of that which is weightier still: my evil disposition, my whole twisted and wretched character. (Compare "the second enlightenment by the law" in Schartau.)

I do so and so. No, it is not I, but Thou, O Spirit of God, in me. It is Thou, O gracious God, who callest me to repentance. It is Thou who workest in me both repentance and faith according to the wholesome order of Thy grace.

If, then, it is a fact that an earnest and sincere sense of guilt exists among our religious contemporaries, what can be the reason why, as has been said, the thought of an angry God no longer presents itself with overwhelming and all-controlling power as it did to seekers after God in bygone days? I think it is chiefly due to the fact that the very thought of God, the faith-concept of our day, has an infinitely more precarious existence. We question the very existence of God. Either there is a God, and then He is good, though that goodness is, to be sure, altogether holy. In its way goodness is among us a necessary, constantly active characteristic of the real and living God.

Or else God does not exist. With us a belief in God like that of the evil spirits (James 2. 19) is no longer natural.

I have allowed myself to be led, and have thereby also led you who read these lines, into a byway. It is now high time that we return together to the main road. We recollect that in the Scriptures "wrath," "anger," and kindred passions are often attributed to God. And we have found in our study of these terms that they still have their factual, though modified, counterparts in modern religious experience, though this experience is not defined and qualified in the same way as that of former days.

It is evident that the intellect—I do not refer to dogmatic thinking as such—when it has itself arrived at a certain degree of refinement, can not but endeavor to clarify its conception of God's wrath and its significance, or, in other words, of how God can be thought of as angry. When this stage of reflection has been attained in the general development of culture, it becomes more and more apparent to the reflective mind that God's wrath can not be conceived

of as of like value with the kind of wrath that obtains in the human sphere, this violently aroused activity of mind for which the very word "wrath" has been created. God's wrath is something else, something higher and purer than human wrath; it is a wrath and yet not a wrath, a passionless emotion.

In general, the same thing holds true with regard to all human expression of divine attributes and of God's relation to the world. All positive definitions and pregnant concepts of God are arrived at *per viam eminentiae*, through the sublimating and spiritualizing of some human analogy or similitude. But as our thinking rises higher, the atmosphere becomes thinner. The expressions and thoughts which once were filled with blood and life become or tend to grow pale and thin.

The bounds of this little treatise do not permit even a sketch of how the originally strongly emotional trait in God's wrath has been pressed back in the progress of the years. We observe a difference even between the Old and the New Testament in their

way of expressing God's wrath. In the New Testament we meet the phrase "God's wrath" especially in the writings of Paul and of course in the Revelation of John. If we observe more closely, we shall find that the expression in a number of places, though not always, occurs in references to the day of judgment, that final and definite *punishment* which shall be inflicted upon the impenitent and godless, a punishment thought of as an almost inescapable consequence of their evil (cf. Mt. 3. 7; Lk. 3. 7). In the New Testament, in the 1917 edition of the Swedish church Bible, the compound word "vredesdom" ("judgment of wrath") has, in the interest of clarity, been used for the Greek word for "wrath."

Even in the famous Greek translation of the Old Testament, the so-called "Interpretation of the Seventy" (LXX), there are, as has often been shown, evident traces of efforts to temper the strongly emotional power in the descriptions of God's aversion to evil. These translators used only two Greek words in rendering the many expres-

sions with strong sensuous coloring in the Hebrew text.

This inclination to soften the emotional element in "the wrath of God," which we detect as an underlying tendency in the Septuagint, appears more strongly and consciously within Christendom ever since the days of the earliest church fathers. This is no doubt due to the general consciousness of the times, especially as represented by the Stoics with their well known doctrine of a dispassionate God. The inner harmony of "the wise man" is not disturbed by any emotions; still less can this be the case with the Deity, they held.

There were, however, among the Christian Fathers some who saw the danger of such extreme rationalizing of the God-concept. I need but mention the name of Lactantius and the title of his renowned treatise, *De Ira Dei*, "Of God's Wrath." With extraordinary acumen he here takes issue with the philosophers and establishes the indispensability of a concrete, i.e., a living conception of God. If God could not be angry, neither could He love.

We must surely agree with Lactantius that for us also the conception of an angry God embodies a thought that is necessary for our faith, especially so because of the spontaneous intensity of God's aversion to evil, to which it gives such striking expression. Our God has a will, and His will in relation to evil must be an aversion of the most radical kind, an absolute "severity" (Rom. 11. 22).

When wrath is not only a passing emotion but becomes a permanent feeling and state of mind toward a person, it is called enmity. A sinner makes God his enemy. And inasmuch as enmity, according to ordinary human conditions, is a reciprocal relationship, the sinner on his part is a foe to the power of goodness and an enemy of God.

This mutual enmity between man and God is pictured with violent realism in the Old Testament. It can hardly be denied that there is not infrequently a bloodthirsty note, a radical unscrupulousness, in these Old Testament metaphors. Their association with nationalistic and partisan passions is apparent. Jehovah fights as the mighty

and unconquerable warrior. He brings bloody and shameful defeat upon His enemies, and His heart is filled with the satisfaction and joy of victory. Conscious of His incomparable power, He even laughs in advance at His opponents and "will have them in derision," since He can tear asunder their plottings as easily as a spider's web (Ps. 2. 4; 37. 13; 59. 9; Prov. 1. 26; 3. 34). In the Book of Wisdom (4. 18) we read, "God shall laugh them to scorn."

In the New Testament the thought of God and men as enemies, hostile to each other, is found especially in the writings of Paul. Attention should be called only to a couple of utterances in two of our Lord's parable stories in the Gospels, namely, in Lk. 19. 27, and Mt. 21. 41, and to Ps. 110. 1, as it is frequently quoted in the New Testament. If we look up the Pauline words "enemy," "enmity," etc., in a concordance—an alphabetic listing of Bible words, which every cultured lover of the Book should have—and examine the words in their context, we shall find that they are probably right who maintain that the emphasis in

Paul is usually on the human side, on man's enmity toward God, rather than on God's enmity toward man. It should perhaps also be observed in passing that it is precisely in this series of expressions pertaining to the enmity between God and men, and not elsewhere, that "reconciliation" belongs. "Reconciliation" means the annulment of the enmity.

It need scarcely be said that neither should we nor could we afford to despise this legacy of important religious terms. There lies a thought, as serious as it is true, in the idea that no one can be neutral in relation to that which is good, and that every decision in which a man chooses that which is evil implies that his will was actually opposed to that which is good. "He that is not *with* me is *against* me" (Mt. 12. 30; Lk. 11. 23). And to be against God is to be His enemy.—Greater difficulties are doubtless involved, so far as I can see, if we are to follow the thought of God's enmity to its conclusion, with God as the subject of the relationship. This is, I believe, at least in part explained by the fact that enmity,

properly speaking, is directed against a personal object.

The possibility of distinguishing between the person and the thing is somewhat increased when we consider the otherwise synonymous term "hatred," a term in which the emotional element is at least equally strongly present. This expression is well known from the Old Testament. In the New Testament it occurs, significantly enough, only in Rev. 2. 6, and, in a couple of Old Testament citations, in Rom. 9. 13 and Heb. 1. 9.

The object of hatred may be either the sin or the sinner. God's reaction may then be thought of as directed, at least primarily, against the former, not against the latter. But upon closer consideration we shall have to admit that it is exceedingly difficult to maintain this distinction between the sinner and his sin. For to the extent that we think in a personal way—and this must for us be the highest and best way—evil is not seen as something apart from the evildoer. Rather does the evil coincide with the evil will,

even as the good is identical with the good will.

Another way of describing God's negative relation to sin is by means of the word "displeasure." God is displeased with sin.

" . . . Thee displeaseth
Everything that's sin and wrong."

(Sw. Ps. 136. 6.)

"Who . . . please not God," wrote Paul, in 1 Th. 2. 15, of the unbelieving and hardened Jews. The opposite of that is, naturally, that God is pleased with someone, or that someone is pleasing to Him. These terms present God to us in the image of a mighty, sovereign king, whose will and desire, pure and simple, become a binding law for His subjects. It is especially God's exalted power and authority that give the peculiar keynote to these expressions.

When, in accordance with Biblical usage, it is said that God "takes vengeance," the expression savors of legal right, but of a right that is as yet undeveloped. Vengeance takes its own course, blindly and unscrupulously, without any concern for the advan-

tage or detriment to human society and without considering the motives of the one upon whom vengeance is taken, but only the effect of his deed. The most striking example of this is found in the ancient blood feuds.

Of course, *we* can not speak of God's "vengeance" in this altogether too human sense. The element in the metaphor which alone arrests our attention is the spontaneous power in the reaction against evil. But even if we interpret the metaphor in this way, it can by no means be classified with expressions of the first rank. The word retains much of the original, concrete character, and herein lies a dangerous possibility of corrupting our conception of God.

The thought of God's vengeance is most often connected with a particular stressing of God's "honor," just as we found a moment ago that His displeasure is linked with His power. God is exceedingly solicitous about His honor. He reacts instantly against every infringement thereof, nor stays until its demands are fully met through the vengeance taken. As is well known, we meet

with this way of thinking in a number of different variations and connections in the Old Testament. Jehovah is indeed a "jealous" God, with unbounded concern for His honor. The "envy" of the Greek gods has but an illegitimate and strange kinship with the solicitude of the God of Israel for His majesty.

"Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies" (Nah. 1. 2).

Now it may be true that the thought of God's honor is very significant and, indeed, wholly indispensable in our conception of God; yet I do not think I am saying too much if I maintain that it does not constitute the very heart of our religious life. It seems to me that it is true both of the honor of God and—as I shall have occasion to point out later (p. 112)—of His "blessedness"—that these concern what we probably might call the more formal aspects of our concept of God.

We say of vengeance that it is "exacted."

This expression points to the sphere of economic life. I can not refrain from injecting here a few lines about a series of images from the same field picturing God as a creditor. I call it an injection, because this imagery is most frequently used when the matter is considered from the human point of view—man as encumbered with debt, as a debtor to God.

We often speak of sin as a debt to God, a debt for which He can and does demand payment. A monetary debt can either be paid or be remitted. Herein lies both the merit and the demerit of the image. Its demerit, for it easily leads to a calculating, or to a mechanical, matter-of-fact conception; it becomes a question of something quantitative, where fundamentally only the qualitative is to be considered. It is evident that this deficiency of our image is associated with the fact that the image itself is taken from the world of matter. Its merit, for a monetary debt I can without any ethical infringement either remit or have remitted, whereas in the granting of grace in the case of a judicial debt there is at least a sense of

suspension of justice. Either my sin, or debt, is an actual violation of that which is right, in which case the granting of grace implies a greater or lesser abridgment of justice; or the pardon becomes an acknowledgment of a mistake or a weakness on the part of the guardian and representative of justice.

Again we establish the fragility and imperfection of the figures of speech by means of which we express our religious experiences, though we have not, indeed, any other means of interpreting these incomparable soul experiences. We shall express ourselves in the simplest and plainest way, no doubt, if, with Per Eklund, we speak of our debt as a personal heart-debt, as distinguished from both criminal and monetary debts, from which our image takes its coloring and form. A debt of the heart—can anything be heavier and more grievous than that? And yet we may place over against that thought one that is the brightest and most uplifting of all: forgiveness, the forgiveness of sin, *remissio peccatorum*—to use an expression more closely related to our imagery—God's remittance of our immeasur-

able debt to Him. Further on we shall have occasion, in so far as we are able, to consider the significance of forgiveness (p. 118ff.).

We are wont to express God's *effective* reaction against sin most often by saying that He "punishes" sin. Closely related to this term are such expressions as the following: God "recompenses," or "judges," "condemns" sin. It is probably no mere coincidence that among us these expressions have taken precedence to other Biblical figures of speech, for punishment, as well as the judgment that precedes it, is vested with the sanctity of law.

A legally constituted society must have recourse to punishment, at least as a deterrent. The ethical consciousness of society, and not only its natural instinct of self-preservation, demands punishment as the sequence to acts detrimental to its life and health, however the punishable acts may be conceived of as to kind and degree and however the quantity and quality of the punishment for them may be determined.

Our moral consciousness demands that evil shall be punished, whether it be as a

sequence which is at least relatively external and unconnected with the evil itself, or as an inner consequence intimately connected therewith, an immanent sequence, so to speak. Inasmuch as we can not conceive of God as independent of or hostile to this fundamental ethical determinism of our being, it must be possible to express His reaction to evil by saying that He "punishes" evil. Just as the good as a directive takes, for the devout mind, the form of God's will and commandments, so punishment corresponds to the inescapable ethical-religious sequence of transgression.

It seems to me, however, that the term "punishment" suffers also from considerable deficiencies when used in the sphere of religion. Just as in civil society punishment may be thought of in different ways, as pure retribution, *jus talionis*, as aiming at self-preservation, as immunization, as a deterrent, as a means of improvement, etc., so the thought of God's punishment also has wide play. There are at least a few of these conceptions of punishment, among them that of self-protection, that we can not apply in the

sphere of religion. And with reference to others, as, for example, the logical, naked doctrine of retribution, most of us will probably harbor great apprehension. Even though we may sometimes use the expression, "God recompenses evil," we do not draw out all the implications of this formula.

We feel instinctively that there may be danger in the use of the thought of God's punishment; for just as this expression is rooted in the juridical sphere with its theories and practices, so it may lead back to that sphere. But in religion everything should be eminently central and psychically motivated. Here there is no difference whatsoever between intention and deed, between omission and transgression. Here everything lies upon the highest conceivable plane.

I should perhaps note in passing that "punishment" and "to punish" are also used by us in an entirely colorless sense, an evidence of the flippant manner in which we often use words expressive of deep ethical and religious conditions. One day I read

in a newspaper of an accident in Pennsylvania. Twenty-four persons had perished in the Chester River because a bridge had been overburdened when a crowd of people rushed upon it to witness the rescuing of a boy from drowning. The headline of that item in the Swedish newspaper read: "Severely Punished Curiosity." Of course, neither the writer nor the reader thought of "punishment" in any other sense than that of a purely natural sequence.

Other expressions for God's attitude toward evil were originally used in a very concrete sense, as for example such familiar ones as God "leaves," "departs from," "forsakes" the sinner. Good and evil are entirely irreconcilable opposites. A separation between the one who is good and the one who is evil is inescapable.

"What fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. 6. 14, 15.)

There are corresponding expressions on the human side, namely, I "go away," "sep-

arate myself from," "forsake" God. The result is that I am "lost," "far away," and a "stranger" to God. It is evident that this series of expressions is connected with the significant and pregnant metaphor that pictures the ethical and religious life as a way and a walking thereon.

In an analogous manner, the changed situation when the will recognizes its evil and is gripped with a longing for that which is good is expressed with the words, God "comes to" man, and man "turns," "returns" to God, "comes to" Him, so as to be "near," in close relation to Him. It would be easy for anyone to supplement this list with several synonymous terms. The expressions, God "turns," "turns His face" from man, or, man "turns" to God, say virtually the same thing, but the imagery varies to some extent.

The words that express coming and departing, respectively, whether God or man be considered as the person toward whom or from whom the movement proceeds, are, when used in the Bible as religious terms,

but faded metaphors, though they still retain at least an emotional echo of the original tone.

It is possible, in the interest of clear thinking, further to refine these terms and to imagine God's attitude toward evil in some abstract, one-dimensional way. It is really helpful to a clear understanding—at least I find it so—if one succeeds in thus construing the thought. I still recollect clearly how great a discovery it was for me when an academic teacher with whom I had the privilege of associating, on one of our customary promenades during my first year at the university, showed me that way of logically "reducing," as in the case of an equation, the various familiar expressions in Biblical and devotional literature, such as God's "wrath," "hatred," etc.

Or else one can do such "reducing" by resorting to analogies in the great laws of nature, for example, those of attraction and repulsion: the good attracts that which is good and repulses that which is evil. But this way is clearly inferior to the former. By it the Deity is altogether too readily

drawn into the categories of natural events, suffering injury in its purely personal aspect, while no appreciable advantage is gained for a logical comprehension.

On the other hand, it will not be denied that the abstractly linear manner of conception is far more sublimated and rational than is the imagery of the Scripture-saturated language in current use. But neither can it be denied—of this I am more convinced from year to year—that it is decidedly inferior to the latter in vitality and truth, considered from the purely religious point of view. There is no gain for living piety in its positive reality in thus removing the visual and “human” element.

Human beings need the atmosphere to breathe in. Pure oxygen would bring on death. It is important and needful for us clearly to understand that our religious power of apprehension as earthly beings is at no point adequate. We are able to think through only the relative, not the absolute. We do not know as we are known.

“For now we see in a mirror, darkly; now I know in part” (1 Cor. 13. 12).

Too long have we been fearful and timid in the presence of the old philosophical criticism that we make God like unto ourselves, a criticism that has not kept silent since the days of Xenophanes. How could anything else be possible than that our God should have human traits? Does not every definition imply something human applied to the absolute? Neither Philo nor anyone else has been able to find satisfaction in the thought of a purely indefinite and indefinable God. Every religious faith, even though its conception of God were most perfect and sublime, must, it seems to me, of necessity include something of the Biblical “God created man in his own image” (Gen. 1. 26, 27; 9. 6). It must with equal certainty proceed from the supposition that God is like the best and highest and noblest in man. Otherwise—if the point of view is to be followed to its logical end—there is no possibility of a living God.

These thoughts are well known, and others have expressed them far more perfectly. My words simply aim to underscore the thought that we have no reason in our reli-

religious life timidly to avoid the concrete religious conceptions. They are by no means as inferior intellectually to the more rational ones as one might at first thought be tempted to suppose. They differ from them in degree only, not in kind. They are not mere rudiments which a higher intellectual culture can and should get rid of. For that matter, it is not only in the world of religion that we capture the soul of a thing better in a picture than in a logical definition. For my religious life in its practical aspects—and that is the essential matter: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, to use a favorite profound expression of the noble George Tyrrell—the more visualizable thought has greater value and significance. The important thing is that we seek God and the expressions for our religious life in the deepest, the most intimate, and the noblest of human experiences, or that, as I have already set forth (p. 42f.), we always interpret in this spirit the terms from another and a lower sphere which from of old have been in use among us. In this way we com-

ply, it seems to me, with an uncanonical word of Jesus often cited in the ancient church, "Be ye approved changers."

You, noble reader, may find this my apology for religious anthropomorphism and anthropopathism quite childish or hyperskeptical, or both, depending on your view of life. At all events, you are apt to suspect or accuse me of a certain stubbornness. I have no very definite arguments to present in refutation of your opinion; but I beg you to take me at my word: there is struggle and suffering back of these lines.

Among the different forms in which we are accustomed to set forth God's attitude toward evil, we have thus far given attention to those in which both parties were more directly presupposed as present realities. May I now bring this mustering of words to a close by considering some that are applicable to God only, in other words, God's attributes, those essential characteristics of His being from which as a fountain the above-mentioned reactions flow. I am thinking of God's holiness and of His righteousness.

What is meant by God's holiness? For ordinary people the answer is simple enough. One thinks of the definition which some of us learned in childhood, "God is called holy because He loves that which is good and hates that which is evil." Or perhaps someone might prefer to say that God's holiness is equivalent to His ethical goodness; that is, to goodness, not in the sense of love or kindness, but just as moral perfection. Thus conceived, holiness becomes not an attribute along with others, which together equal God, but a specific and essential point of view in the ethically qualified conception of God.

It becomes a much more precarious matter to answer the question as to what is meant by God's holiness if one leaves the region of the ordinary methods of apprehension, whether in their more popular or more rational form. It may be said that present-day Biblical science is generally agreed that the terms "holy" and "holiness," both in the Old and the New Testament, have a content with which the ordinary definitions do not correspond. And in the degree

that we are concerned, as we have every reason to be, about learning to know the original significance of the religious terms taken from the Bible, we naturally must pay most attention to what historical and critical exegesis has to say regarding the Biblical value of the expressions in question, whether this appears convenient to us or not. I do not thereby question our full right to use "holy" in its current meaning. But we should be fully aware that this word does not have exactly the same ring in the Bible.

It is comparatively easy to prove this negative assertion, namely, that the definition of holiness as equivalent to moral perfection is neither apt nor exact when applied to the Biblical material, at least not to all of it. The inadequacy of the definition is most obvious with reference to the Old Testament. The New Testament comes closer to the ordinary conception of "holiness," but here, too, the definition is inadequate. The New Testament conception, indeed, has its roots in the Old Testament. It is more difficult to put something distinct, intelligible and positive in place of that

which is negated. It is easier to describe than to give a definition. But this description must, because of the limited space, be rough and general in nature. The reader is referred besides to the brief comments on the word "holy" in the explanatory appendix to the 1917 edition of the Swedish Bible.

"Holy" is the opposite of "profane," "worldly." God's holiness does not really imply an "attribute," but if we should mention any, it would be His exaltation, His unapproachability and majesty. "Glory" is not infrequently mentioned in connection with "holiness." The former in a way signifies the latter in its more or less outward manifestation, in its appearance to the beholder. Everything is holy that is associated with the divine sphere and which in and through it impresses man with a sense of his nothingness and unworthiness as a creature. For this reason, the impression of God's holiness upon the Old Testament saint does not exclusively concern the direct consciousness of sin, the feeling of moral imperfection and want, although this can, of course, and often does, enter therein. "Holi-

ness" affects the whole of man's being. And even if what has been said applies primarily to the Old Testament, it is also, as has just been shown, to some extent applicable to the New. Perhaps we should here recollect how seldom, relatively speaking, the attribute "holy" is applied to God in the New Testament. We find it in Jn. 17. 11; Heb. 12. 10; 1 Pet. 1. 15 f.; 1 Jn. 2. 20; Rev. 4. 8; 6. 10; 15. 4; 16. 5. A comparison between Mt. 5. 48 and Rev. 19. 2 will prove instructive.

The establishment by exegetical investigation of "holy" and "holiness" as signifying to Biblical piety something, we might well say, essentially different from what has generally been supposed has not been confined to exegetical circles. "Holiness" in this new, though in reality very old signification, has been accepted as an exceedingly important, indeed, often as a fundamental category of the modern science of comparative religion, for instance, by our own Nathan Söderblom. Nor has Christian systematic theology in its work left this conception unused. I need but mention the

name of Rudolf Otto and his familiar treatise, "Das Heilige." He describes "holiness" in constantly recurring variations as the "noumenal," perceived as a *tremendum*, i.e., as something awe-inspiring, or as a *fascinosum*, i.e., as something fascinating, or as a *majestas* or a *mysterium*.

It does not lie within my sphere to try to clarify to what extent this modern conception of the idea of holiness, while, so far as I understand, apparently facilitating and promoting a common view of the complex religious events in human history, nevertheless also implies a danger and a difficulty. A danger, inasmuch as the higher forms of a religion may easily run the risk of being pressed down to the level of the lower or be judged in terms of these. A difficulty, inasmuch as the conception of holiness tends to become so enormously wide and simultaneously poor in content. Though I am not in a position to develop these two theses more fully, I think I dare nevertheless express the hope and the expectation that more than one besides myself has fared as I have, when he has sought to compre-

hend as far as he was able what the modern emphasis on the antique category of holiness really implies.

Let that be as it may. I may be right or wrong. It is nevertheless true that the conception "God's holiness" is inconveniently ambiguous, or that it is as a matter of fact used in different meanings. There is still another fact, and one which from our point of view is even more important. If one accepts this antique-modern conception, then "holiness" no longer retains its exclusive relation to moral goodness, as coinciding therewith and therefore in absolute opposition to evil. "Holiness" becomes something "beyond good and evil." Indeed, it becomes the most expressive term, certainly the most expressive Biblical term, for the irrational side of the Deity. But as a consequence it no longer deserves a place among the expressions for God's attitude toward sin, at least not as a clear and unambiguous one.

It can scarcely be disputed that "holiness" as a rule carries with it a certain risk of leading one in upon a naturalistic way of thinking. This follows from the fact that it

is originally qualified by contrast with the "natural." The history of religion clearly testifies to this danger. "Holiness" has too often been conceived as something of a different and higher value. The nearest example is found in present-day Catholicism in its popular and vulgar forms.

In *certain* respects, what has here been said about "God's holiness" pertains also to an expression which is closely related to it in common terminology, namely, "God's righteousness." As children we all learned to say something like this: "Righteousness is the divine attribute in accordance with which God punishes that which is evil and rewards that which is good." And this is indeed both clear and simple. But if we go to the Old Testament, we shall soon find that this definition can not be applied in every instance. This is so evident that in the new Swedish translation of the Bible it was found necessary to place in the Appendix a specific explanation of the matter for the enlightenment of those who are not at home in exegesis. Here we learn that "righteousness" is occasionally synonymous with

"grace," "help," "salvation," "blessing." He that will take the trouble to look up the references given there by way of examples (Judges 5. 11; Ps. 89. 17; Is. 45. 8; 51. 6. See also Ps. 40. 11) will surely agree with me that the translators had real occasion for giving their explanation of the word "righteousness." From another point of view, we might express the matter by saying that the words "righteous" and "righteousness" do not cover the *saddiq*, *sædæq*, *sedāqā* of the Hebrew original. In like manner we might have said that the word "holy" in its current sense does not cover the Hebrew *qadosch* nor the Greek *hagios*.

God's "righteousness"—I use quotation marks here, as often before, to indicate that the expression should be understood as a *terminus technicus*—does not to the Old Testament saint primarily signify that God is a recompensing guardian of the moral law. The Old Testament idea of righteousness includes, or at least can include, something of reasonableness (*billighet*)—though certainly magnanimous—but this reasonableness can in no sense be associated with

the consistently reasoned conception of righteousness. Righteousness and reasonableness exclude one another, are mortal enemies to each other.

Men have sometimes been disposed to define "righteous" in its religious-ethical sense rather formally by saying that he is righteous who lives and acts in accordance with law, a law which is thought of or can be thought of as something comparatively detachable and independent (while the term "good" has its law as something inseparable from its own being). However, this definition is evidently much too pale to do justice to what the Old Testament characters meant when they spoke of "righteousness" in general or, as here, more specifically of "God's righteousness."

If, as is proper, we look also at what the words "righteous" and "righteousness" (*dikaïos, dikaiosyne*) as qualifications of God signify in the New Testament, it is worth recalling that we find no place in the first three Gospels where God is called "righteous" (Mt. 6. 33 does not belong here) and in the Gospel according to John only one

place, namely, 17. 25. The facts are precisely the same as in the case of "holy," as we noted these a while ago (p. 76). The other New Testament places that speak of God as "righteous" reveal, some of them at least, that it is a question of God's intervention as judge (and helper) in behalf of those whom He numbers as His own. (Note especially 1 Jn. 1. 9, where the usual sense of "righteous" is evidently quite impossible.) The Old Testament connection seems to me to be quite unmistakable.

I have not here, any more than in the case of "holy," occasion to enter upon the more exact meaning of "righteous" and "righteousness" in the Old and the New Testament when these words are used concerning human character. In like manner, I may also pass by the "righteousness of God," spoken of by Paul, which is gained by "justification" (assuredly a less happy translation of the Greek word). These terms, though distinctly religious, have no immediate nor essential application to our main consideration.

In analogy with other, earlier references, it may finally be set forth, in our speculations regarding the value of the idea of righteousness, that the word is evidently connected with the sphere of justice. This, indeed, rings forth clearly even in its etymology, and lends to it a strong pathos, namely, the sanctity and inviolability of law and justice—the objective, “blindly” unrelenting quality, which has about it something almost akin to fate.

But, as has already been noted in similar cases, there also lies in the word, as considered from the strictly religious point of view, a certain weakness. In its judicial connotation it is apt to carry with it a certain formality. As is well known, it sometimes happens among men that “the highest justice becomes the highest injustice,” *summum jus, summa injuria*. Naturally, we do not think of God’s righteousness in this way. It is conceived of as a sublimated, absolutized righteousness, free from every human weakness. But it can scarcely be denied that the term itself may more or less easily lead astray in a formal, statutory direction.

It may seem to my honored reader as if these meditations on the terms “holiness” and “righteousness” as referring to God constitute a rather planless and unfruitful negative criticism. I may say that it has not in the least been my intention to argue that these incomparably important forms of expression, these attributes, or whatever they might be called, should be dismissed either from systematic thought or from piety and religious life. That would indeed have been, to use the very mildest expression, more than permissibly naive.

No, I have only wished to note that when we deal with these terms we use them in a sense somewhat different from the usual Biblical one, a rationally cultivated sense, if I may so express it. In other words, I have wished to emphasize that they are not so obviously unambiguous as at first glance and without historical-exegetical foundation they might appear to be. They do not take a wholly unqualified and absolute precedence over the strongly anthropomorphic expressions as we might at first have been

tempted to suppose. They, too, reflect what may be called the human orientation.

O God, Thou hast created me for Thyself. I am aware of this also when I reflect on my manner of thinking and speaking of Thee, Thou who art the Most High. In form it is human and therefore also assuredly very imperfect. But that which I conceive with stumbling thought and utter with a stammering tongue has nevertheless, as Thine own Spirit testifies in my heart, a real correspondence, closer or more remote—alas, even when I speak in this way I confess to Thee my attachment to visualizable forms—a correspondence in the eternal world, in Thyself, O God, my God, who in Thine only begotten Son, my dear Lord Christ, art so fully revealed to me that I look into Thy heart, and yet concealed “in the light which no man can approach unto.”

A LONG LINE of different expressions for God's relation to evil, by far the larger number of Biblical origin, have passed in review before us. We have, as it were, restrained them as they have come before us and questioned them—indeed, subjected them to an examination—in order to ascertain to what extent they have fulfilled their commission as heralds and messengers of the King.

It has not been our intention thereby in any way to show disrespect to the Lord. It was reverence, rather, and love to Him that made us intent and eager to listen to the special testimony of each and every word and to compare their several messages, in order thus to obtain the greatest possible clarity in understanding His mind and will.

Nor do we think that we have been disrespectful to the messengers themselves. They assuredly had no greater desire than to serve to the best of their ability both

Him who sent them and us who dwell in this land of pilgrimage. I do not think that they will take it amiss that, in our ardent desire to behold, though it be in imagery, the perfect One, we had our eyes open to their imperfections.

What does the word "God" signify? What thoughts and beliefs do we necessarily and inescapably associate with this word, or rather, with the reality which the word is used to signify? Pehr Eklund, professor in Lund, used to formulate his answer to this question as follows: "God is the supremely exalted One in whom we trust, believing that He is both willing and able to deliver us from the greatest evil and give us the greatest good." If we accept this definition as mainly correct, at least for the highest kind of piety—our interest is here concerned exclusively with what for us is the highest type of religious life and not with the myriad manifestations of religion in the history of the world—then we must conclude that the God-concept can not be exhausted merely by defining His negative relation to evil.

A God of whom we could say only that He is angry with evil, that He hates and loathes evil, to express ourselves anthropopathically; or that He reacts against evil, to use an expression that has in it an echo of natural law; or that He is far away, infinitely distant from evil, to express the matter in a so to say linear way; or that He is holy and righteous, to use the categories of sublimated religious thinking—such a God would not to us be God. No connection, no *religio*, would be possible between Him and us, who are and remain evil all the days of our life and in every moment of life from the cradle to the grave.

"If Thou wouldst punish
Us as we do merit,
Who, then, could ever
Hope life to inherit?
Lo, 'neath Thy flashes
Earth and sea would perish
With us forever." (Sw. Ps. 387: 2.)

It is essentially the fundamental paradox of religion that it ventures to combine this infinitely frightening aspect with its direct opposite, and to combine them so that nei-

ther one is denied or annulled, but that they become a unity, which, though it is indeed filled with contradictions as viewed by thought, becomes for the life of piety and faith, by reason of this very inward tension and polarity, a source of constant alternation between rest and labor, a life-promoting power, mysterious as life itself.

The believer knows that the uncompromisingly Angry One, the infinitely Distant One, the absolutely Holy One is the God of mercy whose grace and kindness know no limit, the Near One who is closer to him than he is to himself, and the Good One who loves with a love so mighty that no human love deserves to be named in comparison with it, a love which so completely constitutes His very Being that it can be said of Him not only that He is full of love, the active source of love, but that He "is love" (1 Jn. 4. 16), that He is in His very essence identical with love.

Pious souls have given expression in infinitely various ways to this inward tension in their deep religious experiences. The most common terms are probably "sin and

grace," when seen from man's point of view, and "God's holiness and righteousness," when we consider the matter from the point of view of the Divine Being.

A paradox of life neither should nor can be dissolved into something purely rational and void of contradiction. Indeed, if it were possible thus to dissolve it, life itself, for which the paradox is an expression, would come to an end. An anatomist can dismember a lifeless organism as he pleases, but not a living one.

But even though the religious paradox is such a *sanctum*, something holy, a life treasure whereof it should be said, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it" (Is. 65. 8), it is none the less our duty as rationally endowed beings to apply our minds thoughtfully to its character and conditions, to try to ascertain wherein the essential lies and how it reflects itself, more or less imperfectly, in modes of expression and words of faith. It is incumbent upon every age to try to formulate such expressions for this paradox as shall best harmonize with the deepest and noblest consciousness of that age.

It lies entirely outside of my plan to give here even an intimation of the many different attempts which Christian thought has made from the earliest days of Christendom down to the present day better to clarify the implication of the paradox referred to, namely, that the holy God seeks fellowship with sinful man. Naturally enough, we find such attempts, in somewhat varying forms, even in the New Testament Scriptures. According to my way of thinking, one can hardly characterize them rightly as dogmatic theories, strictly speaking.

Among strictly logical and unified theories, that which has left incomparably the clearest marks on the pages of history comes, as is well known, from Anselm of Canterbury, and it may perhaps be said that this theory still lies at the bottom of most of our preaching.

But I am sure that I am not saying too much, if I maintain that a constantly growing number of sincere Christians—and this by no means merely among people who are theologically trained—are deeply and earnestly aware of the deficiencies of that the-

ory. And it is freely conceded by more than one of those who defend the existing doctrines of the Church as an invaluable *clenodium* that the so-called doctrine of satisfaction has its weakness, particularly in a juridical way of thinking and one which tends to become mechanical or at least does not clearly enough exclude one-sidedness in these directions. Insight into the fact that Anselm's construction of the paradox of salvation has not been a satisfactory one has, of course, urged men to seek for other formulas that would more adequately express the altogether incomparable and indispensable religious value that lies in the thought of the atonement.

My dogmatic knowledge is too insignificant to permit me to make a critical examination of these formulas; but, as has already been expressly stated, it is not my object to present a critical account of different theories—and thus to add to these a new theory. I wish, without any pretension, to indicate *one way*, among many other possible or actual ones, in which to think and speak of the atonement, for I am fully aware that no

conception should be allowed to monopolize the field. Different mental pictures give expression to different phases of their object. None of them is perfect nor entirely true to reality. But it is our duty to examine them and to evaluate them in accordance with the degree of clearness with which they reflect the essential and innermost reality.

We began our mustering of different expressions for God's aversion to evil by representing Him as being grieved over sin, an expression of relatively rare occurrence in Holy Scripture. But it is found, directly or indirectly, here and there, both in the Old and the New Testament. We gave extensive consideration to Gen. 6. 5f. (p. 33ff.) We may now add a couple of generally known expressions from the Bible.

In Eph. 4. 30, we read the admonition, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." The context makes it clear that the reference is to the Holy Spirit as indwelling in the Christian's heart. But this Spirit is indeed none other than God Himself, in so far as He has entered into personal communion with man. Whereby does a Christian grieve

the Spirit of God, i.e., God Himself? The apostle's answer is found in what immediately precedes: God is grieved by "corrupt speech," which destroys rather than edifies. The answer is supplemented by that which follows: God is grieved by "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing." In a word, by sin. It is sin that grieves God.

Psalms 78. 40 says concerning the desert generation of Israelites, which, for the sake of edification, especially among the latter-day Jews (cf. 1 Cor. 10. 1ff.), served as an example and representative of the natural heart of man, that "they grieved him in the desert."

Just as clearly, though indirectly, we hear of God's grief when, in His parable of the lost sheep, the Lord says that "even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons, who need no repentance" (Lk. 15. 7; cf. the parallel passage, Mt. 18. 13), or in the collateral parable of the lost coin, where He says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sin-

ner that repenteth" (Lk. 15. 10). There will be joy where before sorrow and grief prevailed. The joy which thus makes itself felt presupposes that its opposite had previously held sway.

Yes, such feelings alternate in the heavenly world, "in heaven," "in the presence of the angels." But is this also true of God Himself, the Exalted One? I do not doubt in the least that Christ's description of God is so concretely living that it permits such a placing of the heavenly world and the heavenly Father side by side. It is the father who grieves for his prodigal child far more deeply, intensely and tenderly than the hired servants, yes, than the elder brother—to present the matter with expressions borrowed from the last in the matchless trilogy of parables concerning the salvation of the lost as seen from God's point of view. For observe how the prodigal son becomes speechless after having confessed his sins. We hear nothing at all of his gratitude. He is, as it were, the pure object of the joy and gladness of the others, not himself the subject of joy.

It is quite superfluous to cite any proof texts in defense of one's right to speak of God's grief over sin and evil. The Bible passages which have been used were not quoted with any such object in view, but rather as purely illustrative.

There are no external arguments that give us the right to think of God as grieved and sorrowing. It is rather our own experience of God which gives us this right and even compels us to think thus. When in Christ I experience God as the forgiving and gracious Father who in spite of all opens His arms to me, I also perceive in His look something of the father's grief for his prodigal son, who had been lost but had now returned.

Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 7. 9–11 of sorrow "after a godly sort," a sorrow consistent with God and according to His will, a sorrow that "worketh repentance." It is very bold, to be sure, but let me nevertheless say it, in the hope that it may be rightly understood: Corresponding to this human sorrow "after a godly sort," there is also a divine sorrow after the manner of men, a sorrow

on God's part which is analogous to the purest and noblest human grief.

The comparison limps, to be sure, but this is more or less true of everything that is spoken after the manner of men. There are two special points of difference which I wish to indicate. I am grieved over my own sin, while God grieves over the sin of another, over my sin. Furthermore, my grief is as nothing in comparison with the grief which God experiences in His heart. God grieves far more deeply over my sin than I do myself, even in my deepest anguish of repentance. It has been said that only a Christian can truly repent, or, to put it in more modern and explicit words, that the hideousness of evil is seen most distinctly and perceived most painfully by one who has had his eyes opened to the value of goodness. How, then, can anyone see sin with such grief as does He besides whom "none is good" (Mk. 10. 18)?

But why do I present this picture of the grieved God thus strongly and in a way that is no doubt offensive to some, when I am fully aware of the anthropomorphic char-

acter of the imagery? Because it appears to me as though we may, by means of this representation, be enabled to catch sight of and to visualize the deep personal unity between the two divine attributes which threatened to fall apart or come into conflict with each other, namely, God's goodness on the one hand and His righteousness on the other. It is entirely impossible for us to conceive of God as in any respect or at any point suspending or modifying either of these sides of His divine being. Both must have absolute validity.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has, as no one else before Him, made the idea of God as Father the most central one in a true conception of God. In life and death, He placed infinite trust in the Father, and His message centered about the Father.

We are not ignorant concerning what the name Father meant to Him. For Him there lay in that name the majestic right and authority of God, an unlimited *patria potestas*. Therein lay His wisdom, might, and providence. Therein lay His goodness and merciful kindness. But there can

scarcely be any doubt, when we consider the general impression of the character of Jesus according to the gospel story, that the dominating trait in His conception of the Father was that of goodness. Might, sternness, and sovereignty enter as the nearest qualifications of this goodness. "God is love." With this definition John (1 Jn. 4. 8) has given that which is most essential, the very kernel in the God-concept of Jesus Christ, indeed, His very experience of God.

God loves; He does nothing else but love. But when this love is conferred on a being who does not respond to it, on one who neither can nor will respond to it, the love does not indeed cease, but it becomes an aggrieved love. It is thus with human love when it is most pure and perfect.

For us as human beings, as each one doubtless knows from experience, it is most natural to let our love turn to melancholy, coolness, aversion, and hatred when the object of our love closes his heart to us in disrespect and indifference.

But surely there is none who will not upon closer reflection admit to himself that

this love is far from perfect, that it is, in fact, a rather low and cheap kind of love. And he will bow his head in quiet humility before the eternal and unchangeable love, the love that can not be brought into conflict with itself, but remains forever true. "Magna est caritas et praevallet!" he will exclaim, adapting an old saying. "Great is the power of love, yes, greater than anything else." Or, in the words of Paul, "Love never faileth" (1 Cor. 13. 8).

Our sin can not annul God's love, but makes it the love of One that is aggrieved. It is love none the less, in spite of the grief. The joy in the heavenly world over the one sinner who repented is greater than that over the ninety and nine, says our Lord in His application of the parable concerning that which was lost to God, just as in the human world the shepherd took more delight in the one sheep that was found and the woman in the one coin that was found than in the greater values that were in safe keeping. This abounding joy reflects the previous deep sorrow and anxiety over that which was lost.

Sorrow does not lie outside the sphere of love, but enters into union with it in such manner that no conflict nor tension arises between them, and this so much the less since there lies in all human love—and this is after all our model even when we speak of divine love—something of longing, a reaching out toward another.

In a familiar passage in his *Symposium*, 203 B, Plato has profoundly characterized the nature of love—in mythical form, as he often does when he deals with that which is highest and therefore most difficult to describe in mere words—by letting the wise Diotima tell Socrates that *Eros*, "Love," is a child of *Poros* (it is difficult to translate the Greek word accurately, but let us say "Resource," or better still, "Plenty") and *Penia*, "Poverty." I do not think anyone will, upon closer consideration, feel inclined to deny the correctness of this psychological analysis. I, at least, have no desire to do so. If we recognize it as striking, there clearly lies in the very idea of love direct points of contact for gladness

and satisfaction, as well as for grief and seeking.

"The grieved God"—for us Christians, this thought becomes more living and concrete in "the grieving father." Before our mind's eye comes the picture of the old man in our Lord's parable who, filled with forebodings, saw his son depart into the foreign land, and who waited and waited until he finally received him back again in filth and rags (Lk. 15. 11 ff.).

There is nothing in the parable about any objections of the father to the foolish and dangerous request of the younger son. Nothing is said of any efforts on the part of the old father to find the son's whereabouts or of any attempts in the last moments to save him from the missteps which he surely foresaw or feared. But this should perhaps be ascribed to what is usually called the economy of the parable story, i.e., its concentration upon the essential and sustaining points and the passing of the non-essentials which might otherwise divert attention from the main points of interest. No listener or reader can, however, be in

uncertainty as to how the father felt toward the son during all the time that he was away from him.

When one hears the story of how the father, while his son was yet far off, ran to meet him, "fell on his neck, and kissed him," and is moved by the father's words of overflowing joy and the command concerning the arrangements for the feast, it is impossible to imagine that these feelings of love came to birth first at the sight of the prodigal himself. One realizes that this love has been alive in the father's heart during all that long time of waiting, and one surmises how that father-heart suffered and grieved during the days of waiting and anguish that seemed never to end.

I said a moment ago (p. 98) that by looking at God's reaction against sin from the point of view of grief we seem to gain a not insignificant advantage, namely this, that we thereby escape the inner conflict between holiness and love in His being, an opposition which is otherwise encountered, at least in our thinking, and which, though it may be covered up by apparent syntheses, never-

theless remains fundamentally unreconciled. If this is so, we have undeniably made a gain in the rational field. But it is possible that we may be able to make an even greater gain from the point of view of the religious content, in comparison with which formal rationality is of decidedly subordinate value.

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men" (Gal. 3. 15). When we wronged our loved ones, which made the strongest impression on us, their wrath and displeasure or their sorrow and grief? On the child it may be that wrath had the greatest effect, instilling a wholesome fear of violating the parents' will and inclining it to desist from its selfish desire and bow to the authority of its parents. For the adult, the matter takes on a different aspect.

No doubt all of us have often been deeply touched by stories of human lives in which the memory of a father's heartfelt sorrow or a mother's bitter tears effected a turning to something better from a course that was leading to failure. History knows of many a Monica and of many a one who like

Augustine rightly bears the name "Child of Many Tears," a veritable Benoni (Gen. 35. 18). And I believe that most of us harbor in our innermost being some memory or other of that kind. The thing that was most overwhelming and which moved our heart most deeply was not the direct displeasure which expressed itself in words and in more or less external punishment, but the great grief of those whom we loved, or rather, who loved us. For we realize clearly, when we think of the deepest significance of our experience, that it was not *our* love for them that saved us, but *their* love for us; it was their grieved love that bore us in our weakness and that snatched us from the jaws of evil. It was *their goodness* that led us to repentance (Rom. 2. 4).

So much may be said to emphasize the value of the viewpoint which has been here advanced concerning grief as God's mode of reacting against sin. But it is our simple duty also to try, as far as we can, to get a clear conception of the inadequacy of this manner of presentation. For it is to be expected even beforehand that there will be

a *contra*, as well as the *pro* we thought we could see, something that argues *against* it as well something that speaks *for* it. Yes, it may well be that this *contra* will prove to be weightier, indeed, far weightier, than the previous *pro*. If this should prove to be the case, it follows that we must use the thought of an aggrieved God only with the utmost care, so that it will be constantly corrected and balanced by other and clearer thoughts, unless indeed we shall feel compelled to abstain entirely from its use, even though this should be connected with a certain sense of loss.

One may raise the objection, apparently with perfect right and inescapable consistency, that grief is passivity. Consequently, it implies that it is God who receives impressions while, in contradiction to this, the fundamental thought belonging to the God-concept, that He is active, almighty, and sovereign, is altogether thrust aside. I do not believe that we can, by any purely logical argumentation, free ourselves from the iron grip with which this objection takes our conception of an aggrieved God by the

throat. But I do not therefore by any means believe that our case is lost.

In the first place we must consider the actual nature of our religious life. To me it seems most unlikely that there should be any form of religion which could entirely dispense with the thought of some sort of passivity in God. It is in any case certain that Christian piety, such as we experience it, can not dispense with that thought. I need but remind you of that which is innermost in piety, namely, prayer. And there can be no thought among us of sacrificing the living, however full of contradictions it may be, for the sake of that which is straight-lined but lifeless. After all, the straight line does not belong to the world of the living.

It should furthermore be emphasized that we do not think of grief as isolated, but as a more definite qualification of love. God is not grief; no, He is love, the love which, like all genuine love, can be grieved. And, as has just been emphatically maintained, aggrieved love is by no means merely passive. Our own experience testifies clearly

to the tremendously active power that is present in grief, in spite of its seeming weakness. And if we may use this analogy from human life, as I think we have a right to do, since it contains something of the best and most fundamental in our experience, we may indeed employ, with some modification, a word of Paul which in part was meant to convey a different meaning, and express ourselves in this way, "The weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1. 25).

But I hear another cautious voice saying to me, "Your most one-sided emphasis on grief in God gives evidence of a certain laxity in the consideration of evil and leads more and more in that direction." I think I have answered such an objection with sufficient clearness in what was said concerning the impression made upon us by the anger of our loved ones and by their grief. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10. 31). Yes, but it is not less fearful to grieve God. I must seek for a refuge from the grieved God, and I find it in the grieved God. Yes, it is God's

goodness that would lead me to repentance (Rom. 2. 4).

Let us cherish no illusions, thinking we may escape the antinomy, the contradictions, in the God-concept by speaking of God's grief. No, the antinomy is still there. Though it may seem to us as if, by following the proposed line of thought, we had succeeded, at least to some extent, in softening the immanent tension between the goodness and the holiness of God, we have in reality merely moved the contradiction to another point.

And here, then, we meet with a new objection: God's grief is diametrically opposed to His blessedness. For in grief there lies, indeed, a strong and pronounced element of pain and suffering. And just as we said earlier that no one can be as profoundly aggrieved as God, it now seems that, however much we guard against it, we shall not be able to avoid positing the exceedingly jarring paradox: no one can suffer, i.e., be so unblessed (*osalig*), as God.

No, no! An unblessed God is no God. No absolute God. How then can He be our

God? No, God is "the blessed and only Potentate . . . who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable" (1 Tim. 6. 15, 16). God, the Blessed One, suffers! With the full power of pure instinct we reject that thought as unworthy, yes, as blasphemous.

And yet I am sure that none of us can, as a matter of fact, altogether dispense with this thought in his actual religious life. At times it may possibly be, so to say, a tacitly implied belief, a more or less conscious silent supposition. But it will scarcely be altogether absent in the inner life of a Christian.

Our God rejoices (Dt. 28. 63; 30. 9; Is. 62. 5; 65. 19; Ps. 104. 31), rejoices over righteousness—and grieves over unrighteousness. As a child of God, I desire to make Him glad—and I, i.e., my better self, would greatly desire not to cause Him grief. Sorrow is, then, at least a possibility. And who among us is not aware of how often he makes that possibility a reality? It may be said that the expressions here used are naively anthropomorphic. Indeed, they are.

But there inheres in them, so far as I can understand, indispensable religious values which one has no right to give up even though they seem to make a rational construction of the God-concept impossible.

But then the question arises from inner necessity: When it is thus apparent that our attempt to project the category of God's grief does not remove the contradiction from a rational God-concept, what purpose is then served by these extended meditations? Why not rather be satisfied with the more accepted way of thinking? Is not all that precedes an unprofitable and indeed culpable juggling with words? Can there really be any gain in moving the cardinal point of the antinomy from "holy—good" to "blessed—grieved"? Yes, however improbable it may seem, I really venture to maintain that this shifting of the center of gravity brings with it an advantage for our religious thinking that is not altogether unessential.

If one considers more closely what is usually included under the heading of "God's attributes," he will find that the qualifica-

tions named by no means have equal religious value. Attributes that speak of God's character, of His heart—if we shall make bold to choose the most evidently human expression—have, so to say, the greatest religious content, while qualifications that signify His exaltation above time and place do not lie as near to the center of religious experience. The latter are indeed necessary and indispensable, but their necessity is of a somewhat more formal and inferential character. It should not be necessary to develop more fully the significance of this familiar fact.

This only remains to be added, namely, that while the antithesis "holy—good" must definitely be classified with what may be called the attributes of character, the antithesis "blessed—aggrieved" seems to show a closer relationship to the more formal attributes of the absolute, even though the "blessedness" as a concrete qualification may have been arrived at *per viam eminentiae*, by sublimating and absolutizing human happiness. And it appears to me that a tension or, let us say it plainly, a contradiction,

can be endured with comparatively less pain and difficulty if this contradiction lies in the more formal sphere than if it touches the very will-life of God, the innermost of His being.

But I must dwell on one thing more. And in its presence my heart shrinks with anxiety and fear. As the prophet Isaiah once inquired of Thee, Thou Holy One of Israel, when Thou didst permit him to behold the devastating judgment upon his people, "Lord, how long?" so I now stand before Thee, Thou who art grieving over mankind, with that same question upon my lips, "Alas, O Lord, how long?"

I know the inviolability of Thy law, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." I also know the fearful risk inherent in the noble freedom which Thou hast given to men. It is possible for us in perversity to close our hearts to Thee forever.

When I behold Thee and my own soul with the dim vision of this earthly life, I can indeed bear to see the grief in Thine eyes. Thy saddened look only serves to draw

me nearer, nearer to Thee. But on the other side, in the land of eternity. And how shall they fare, Thine other children, my fellow men, my brothers, if they do not permit themselves to be led to repentance by Thy boundless goodness?

Wilt Thou forever be the Grieving One, the Suffering One, the Unblessed One?—I speak after the manner of fools, yes as a fool among fools. Or can Thy grief, Thy suffering, Thine unblessed state of mind cease while there is yet one solitary sheep out in the desert, a single child astray and lost in the foreign land? Does not Thy pitying goodness know some way of deliverance which I, with my human limitations, can not discern?

I am speaking to Thee in a purely human way, and my thoughts of Thee are only human thoughts. Forgive me. Be not displeased, O Lord, with the boldness of me, Thy servant, who "have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." But Thou Thyself knowest best that I am not able to speak to Thee in any other language. Thou knowest that I can not

think of Thee except in a poor, imperfect human way.

And yet, I am afraid of these questions of mine, this appeal of mine. For I call to mind, with fear and trembling, what Thine only begotten Son answered the disciple who in foolish zeal would snatch the cup of suffering from the lips of his Master, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men." Therefore I will say as did Thy sincere servant Job, "I lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, and I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." I would rather listen to Thine answer.

Thine answer, O my God, to these anxious questions I clearly and distinctly perceive in the words of Thy Son, my Lord, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish," and in the words with which Thou didst answer Thy suffering servant Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

And for my own part I must then confess that if I disdain Thy grace "*I am worthy*

of eternal condemnation, shouldst Thou judge me according to Thy justice and my sins." And as concerns my brothers, I am sure that Thou dost forbid me to comfort them with a cheap, and therefore also false, optimism.

I bow down before Thee and pray, with mine eyes fixed upon Thy Son, my Saviour, and in His last words here on earth, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit," my spirit and that of my brothers. And so I leave *everything* with Thee.

IN SPITE OF the clear consciousness of his sins, a Christian dares harbor the assurance that in Christ he has a God and Father who has forgiven and forgives everything whereby he has grieved and still grieves Him (Eph. 4. 32). He knows and confesses that only thus did God become God to him, his God in a real and true sense, a God who opened His arms to him and pressed him to His heart as a child. This is the *sanctissimum*, the innermost in our experience of God. Now let us consider whether analogies from human life—for with such we are dealing continually in this little treatise, in which everything is spoken “after the manner of men” (Rom. 6. 19)—have anything to tell us about an inner relationship between the grieved and the forgiving Father.

In our intercourse with our fellow men, we distinguish between excusing and forgiving. If I have wronged anyone, I may first say, “Excuse me.” But it happens quite

often that I realize the very next moment that it was not the right expression for what I should have said or what I wanted to say, and I correct myself, and say, “No, forgive me.”

That I did not immediately implore forgiveness was due, naturally, to my spiritual pride. For when I ask for forgiveness, I, on the one hand, ask for more than when I merely ask to be excused—and it is very hard to ask for something, and more and more painful in proportion to the magnitude of the request. On the other hand, when I use this weightier word, I admit my own fault—and it is not pleasant to admit one’s fault to another as a real fault, and especially to the very person wronged.

So much from the point of view of one who asks to be excused or forgiven by another. If, again, we view the matter from the opposite angle, that of the one who excuses or forgives, we posit a corresponding relationship.

When I excuse a wrong, I try to enter with comparative inner calm into the situation and circumstances of my offending

brother. I then find that the external and inward reasons that brought about or contributed to the offense against me constitute an explanation that is at least relatively sufficient and satisfying. It demands a certain reasonableness on my part, a sort of magnanimous condescension. But such demands as are incident to the category of the reasonable I can fulfill without any inner agitation.

But when I forgive, this implies strong mental agitation and tension. I refer, of course, to genuine forgiveness, which is truly deserving of its name. It happens often, indeed, most often, that we respond to the request of a fellow man for forgiveness, not by granting him forgiveness, but by giving him something of much lesser worth, a rather thoughtless excuse. In the proportion that the act of forgiveness is genuine and magnanimous it implies a gripping and stirring of the soul. I forgive in the true sense only when the wrong of another appears in flaming vividness to my consciousness as a real wrong, and my love, nevertheless, gladly sheds its heart-blood to

extinguish that flame. And, as has just been said, forgiveness becomes, at least as seen from one point of view, so much the more precious and high-born as it has cost more energy of soul and spirit.

Real forgiveness is given with gladness. This is true. But just as our eyes react with tears to both sorrow and joy, and to both in conjunction, so there lies in the great joy of forgiving, than which no joy is purer, also the acme of grief, than which no suffering is nobler. In the moment of forgiving, the highest joy and the greatest pain meet in the giver, as well as in the receiver of the forgiveness.

Again we catch a glimpse of the father with the prodigal in his arms. We see his tears flowing down upon that son as a cleansing and regenerating flood, tears of joy at finally having found again the one who was so sorely missed, tears which also release in a violent outburst the grief so long harbored. There is no place for any cheap excuses in consideration of the son's youth, the ease with which he could be led astray, and the magnitude of the tempta-

tion. Here nothing suffices but the living stream of tears gushing forth from the fountain of pity and grief.

Only grieved love can forgive. In it there is no place for justice or calculation, but only for free, boundless grace and compassion. We may indeed say that if there is any point in human life where blessedness and unblessedness, conditions which are radical opposites in our thinking, meet in unity, not of thought, but of life, it is here, in the moment of forgiving and forgiveness.

The Christian Church has from the beginning bound up her thoughts of God's forgiveness, nay rather, her experience of it, with a definite point in history, namely, with one of the many crosses that were raised in times past on Golgotha, outside Jerusalem, with that cross on which a certain Jesus, a Jew from Nazareth who lived in the days of Caesar Augustus, breathed His last. The Christian ties up his assurance of God's forgiveness, its reality as well as its possibility, with hours, easily counted as to their number, which marked a young man's death struggle, with a human life

which now belongs to the remote past and which for mankind becomes more remote with every passing year.

Such are indeed the facts. Therefore, as is right and proper, the Christian communion has been most sensitive to any presentiment or suspicion of even the slightest change or alteration at this point. Indeed, a human being, i.e., a sinner, has no greater treasure than *remissio peccatorum*, the forgiveness of sins. All the roads of Christendom lead, and must lead, to Calvary. From every point in the Christian's life and thinking, a straight way shall lead to that Acropolis which dominates his life and thought. For him, all other roads lead astray. Even though an exalted and genuine piety may walk upon them, they are not Christian, at least not in the actual and historical sense of that word.

The forgiveness of sins wells up at the cross of Jesus Christ. On this certainty of faith, the Christian Church, at least as an organization appearing in history, stands united. When it comes to the exact *how* of this fact, conceptions are divided among the

various Christian confessions, the separate tendencies in the Church, and the manifold theological schools, and, indeed, not less among individuals.

It would not be a single day too soon if from now on we learned to speak in a lower voice and, above all, with greater reverence and humility concerning this *how*; for here, if anywhere, we stand on holy ground. Here, if anywhere, we are dealing with God's thoughts, which are infinitely higher, deeper, and more embracing than we can comprehend.

Most of us who in all frailty dare to confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour are apt to conceive of the occurrence on the hill outside the Jerusalem gate as a closed event, a chronological date, fixed with comparative exactness, as beyond comparison the most important event in the religious life of mankind.

In that precise moment a fundamental change took place in God's relation to the human family which He had created. In principle, as an individually realizable possibility, God then gave the forgiveness of

sins to the world of untold generations and individuals; or we may, with a somewhat different orientation though in almost the same terms, express the matter by saying that God reconciled Himself objectively with men. When God forgives you or me our sins, when we experience this forgiveness, this implies a subjective and individual realization of the possibility already at hand.

But since I greatly prefer, as my readers have no doubt frequently observed, concrete and descriptive expressions to abstract ones, though the latter may seem more dignified in the eyes of some, I shall use figurative language here also, and of a kind that has often been used to visualize what has just been said. A king issues a decree of amnesty promising freedom from punishment and full citizenship to, let us say, those guilty of high treason. Thereby an opportunity is given every person of that description to resume his former freedom and full rights of citizenship. But if, for instance, a criminal has gone into exile, this possibility becomes a reality only when he shall have

learned of the royal decree and shall have become convinced that it is genuine and, as a consequence, shall have returned to his home land.

Now, whereas my purpose, as has been emphasized perhaps to the point of boredom, is in no way polemical or critical, I have no interest in a detailed demonstration of the difficulties that pertain to the conception here outlined, which is quite familiar to us all. I have less interest in doing so since no human conception is or can be entirely satisfactory.

I shall only permit myself a few purely personal and subjective meditations on this most objective matter. I shall point out only one way—among others—of looking at it, with the thought that his may help someone to discover new phases of the greatest mystery in the kingdom of God, which perhaps may not seem so clear when the usual ways of thinking are followed.

My principal thesis—though I am loath to use the word “thesis” about so tremendous a reality of life—is, briefly expressed, as follows:

The suffering of Jesus unto death on the cross of Golgotha is the climax of God's own suffering and therefore the fountain-head of all forgiveness of sins.

In order that this thought might be clearly designated as the sustaining thought, I have deliberately given my little treatise a title which may perhaps seem provocative to many, “The Suffering God,” not being satisfied with the formulation which is certainly less offensive, namely, “The Grieved God.”

A Christian stands in quiet and worshipful devotion as he beholds the suffering and crucified Saviour. It would not be possible for him to use such words as “reverence” and “admiration” for the emotions which here fill his soul. These words would be altogether too weak and inadequate. And what is most marvelous of all is that in this viewing by faith he is conscious of no real distance in time and place.

Though I am up here in the distant North, I have no impression of being thousands of miles away from Calvary nor of

the two thousand years between the present and the event which occurred there. I carry the sense of Calvary with me wherever I may be on this terrestrial ball, as something truly present and contemporary, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I see the cross as if just raised, and this no less clearly than did the Jews who stood before it on Good Friday.

It may perhaps seem bold and even presumptuous of me to speak thus of my experience, which in thought, my own also, appears strained and artificial, as if it were a universal and typical Christian experience. But it is my contention that this really is so.

As a historical reality at least, Christianity has not been founded upon Jesus of Nazareth merely as a character of the past. Actually, it has rather accepted Christ as the living, active, ever-present Saviour.

I shall not let myself be drawn into any polemic against the widespread modern conception that to men of today nothing but "the historic Jesus" with "His inner life" can be the foundation of faith. I make bold

to maintain that this is a dogmatic interpretation, one that does not harmonize with the true nature of Christian piety and life. There are modern dogmas as well as traditional ones; and I, for my part, have no greater respect for something new because of its newness than for something old. In both cases I wish to retain my complete freedom to follow the admonition of Paul in 1 Th. 5. 21, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

The Christian Church has through all the past centuries founded its faith upon the ever-living Christ. But His earthly life was a part of this eternal life which He has in Himself. For the essential thing, the attitude of His heart and mind, is in all respects the same in the exalted and glorified Christ as in the earthly Jesus, who was obedient unto death on the cross.

If, according to our custom, we wish to exemplify this more clearly, we may point to the description by John the Evangelist of how the risen Saviour appeared to His disciple Thomas while he was still unbelieving (Jn. 20. 26ff.). The Risen One ap-

pears with the marks of the crucifixion on His body. The Living One still bears the marks of His shameful and painful death, these kingly insignia that bring the disciple to his knees before Him "who was dead, and lived again" (Rev. 2. 8), and put on his lips the unprecedented exclamation of homage, "My Lord and my God."

If a Christian be asked what the living Lord is like who lives in his heart by His Spirit and in whom he puts his trust, he knows no other and no better way of answering than to point to Him who went about here on earth and did good to all and died for His brethren in obedience to His Father. The living Christ of faith is, then, "inseparably and undividedly" united with the historical Jesus, that is, if faith is to remain healthy and not to be subject to feverish imaginings. But in my opinion this union must not be thought of as if the Christ of faith were something derived, either as to time or being. It is the Living One who makes the past, His past, living. It is not *we* who join ourselves to something from the past.

The contents of the human memory have been called a "living past." (Observe, for example, J. Landquist's title for one of his collections of essays, "The Living Past," 1919.) This category is highly significant. But if I understand it rightly, the Christian faith, rather as a presentiment than as a clear comprehension, considers the earthly life of our Lord as a "living past" in a way that differs not only in degree but in kind from every other human recollection. To the eye of faith, the gospel story has what I would like to call an eternal character. And I hold that, although paradoxal, this is a thought that is indispensable to the Christian faith.

It would lead me altogether too far if I should, in so far as I am able, develop in detail and explain my thought concerning this matter; furthermore, I hope to have the opportunity at some future time to publish a few meditations on the subject after the manner of a layman. But *something* should be said about it at this time. Otherwise I would run the risk of deceiving you, my worthy reader. When I think and speak

of the cross and of forgiveness before the Crucified One, it is always with the presupposition that we are not here dealing with something that belongs only to the past, but which belongs also, and especially, to the present. And if this is an essential supposition for my meditations, it becomes my plain duty to point this out clearly, even if the reader should be made apprehensive and suspicious thereby. And I can well understand his misgivings.

We look up at the suffering and crucified Saviour. And He looks upon us. What can we read in His look? The eyes are, as with inner justification we are accustomed to say, "mirrors of the soul." Let us at this time disregard His speech, His silence, and His gestures as expressive of His way of thinking and His state of mind and instead look into His eyes, the mirrors of His soul. To capture the look from His eyes, we must, as has just been intimated, turn to the gospel story.

On a number of occasions the Evangelists find reason to speak of the looks of Jesus. The expression in His eyes must have made

an indelible impression on those who were round about Him.

This is, to be sure, not an entirely unique or rare occurrence. We all know or surmise to some extent from our own experience that the eyes of a good and noble person have a wonderful power over men. History furnishes many incontestable evidences of this. I need only mention, by way of example, Apollonius of Tyana, a younger contemporary of Jesus, who, at the time when Christianity was beginning to outflank the worship of the ancient gods, was presented by the heathen world as a rival counterpart of Jesus Christ. Or we may think of our reformer, Luther.

But we have been following Jesus, our Lord, on His journeys through the Holy Land, while He is still on the way, and we are now standing before Him practically at the end of His journey, before Him who is suffering and dying. What did His look in that hour say? What does it still say?

In his Gospel (22. 61), Luke tells us something in addition to that which the other two synoptical Evangelists relate,

namely this, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." The scene does indeed belong to another setting, namely, to the palace of the high priest, and took place a few hours earlier than the events on Golgotha hill, but inwardly it has nevertheless the strongest connection with it.

I am sure that you, my dear reader, whoever you may be, have more than once been inexpressibly stirred as you contemplated the Lord's look upon Peter, stirred to the very depth of your being at the thought that "thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12. 7), the one who made such great and enthusiastic promises of faithfulness until death, but who in unthankfulness and dishonor proved false to them in the hour of testing.

"My sin and guilt Thou borest there,
Thy love hath me o'ertaken.
Thou callest me
To come to Thee
And be Thy child forever."

(Sw. Ps. 89: 2.)

And I am sure that at that look from the Lord you did as Peter had done: you went out, out from the place where the eyes of

men were upon you, into your chamber, into a secret place, and wept bitterly.

What was expressed by this look upon the faithless disciple, this last look bestowed upon Peter by the earthly eyes of his Lord? We all know, though it is not mentioned in plain words in the gospel story. We do not merely surmise it, we know it, if indeed our spiritual eyes have even the least power of accommodation, if we have anything of that which the Germans call "Nachempfindung"—I regret that I can not find a word for it.

What lay in that look of the Lord? Was it holy wrath?—No.

Was it the superiority of the spiritually stronger one?—No.

Was it merely a disappointment that was more than justified?—No.

Was it the anguish of soul of one condemned to death?—No.

Was it the consciousness of the correctness of His prediction?—No.

It was grief, the indescribable grief that suffers, suffers even unto death, not only *for*, but just as truly *with* him that has done wrong.

My friend—for I now venture to call you by that name, my dear reader—have you never in your daily association with your loved ones experienced something of this kind, even though in lesser degree? Do you not still feel a smarting but wholesome pain, similar to that after a necessary, life-promoting physical operation, at the memory of a long, profound questioning look from father, sister, wife, husband, or friend, fixed upon you when you had uttered a hasty, untrue, frivolous word or done a wrong act?

If you have never had any such experience, you are very poor, and you will hardly understand the words, "The Lord looked upon Peter." Such a look of suffering love can and should be an invaluable treasure which we should prize and praise. For the look which meets you there is that of a Brother, but finally and fundamentally it is the eye of God that rests upon you. This human grief is exalted, venerable, majestic. There is something divine in it.

To clarify this thought, I might point out a small detail in Luke's reference to the last look of Jesus upon Peter. In the pas-

sion story as told by Luke as well as in that of the other Gospel writers, the Saviour is called by His earthly name Jesus. But here, as if instinctively, the name Lord suddenly appears: "The *Lord* looked upon Peter," "Peter remembered the word of the *Lord*." There was indescribable depth in that look of grief. I realize that here the appellation "Lord," considered from a sober historical point of view, may have come from the pen of Luke or his elder informant by sheer accident. But my combination may nevertheless merit some slight attention for its homiletical use, since, regardless of its fragile historical foundation, it reflects a reality of life.

Our Lord's look was that of a Sufferer. In his narrative, John the Evangelist lets us catch another gleam in the eyes of the Suffering One. This time we are able, with the help of accompanying words, to interpret its implication.

"When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! Then

saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother!" (Jn. 19. 26, 27.)

Only the eyes of great and mighty Love are thus expressive. It were superfluous, yes, offensive, to develop this or try to "prove" that such is the case.

The picture of the suffering Lord is so incomparably precious to a Christian that he can not willingly dispense with a single trace of it as found in the oldest Christian tradition, I mean that in the New Testament. A third passage in the New Testament may therefore be mentioned, that where we read of the eyes of the suffering Saviour. We find this outside of the Gospels, in that most remarkable scripture entitled "To the Hebrews," an epistle which, in spite of its being markedly determined by its historical environment, impresses me deeply, although I know perfectly well that others, who are by no means inferior scholars, adjudge the epistle differently for reasons which I fully understand even though I can not personally accept them. This letter says of Christ:

"Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death . . ." (Heb. 5. 7).

The eyes of the grieved and loving Saviour were filled to overflowing with tears. How noble, how truly human! The man Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, weeps violently, cries aloud in agony and fear because of that which is to come upon Him, and in grief and love for friends and foes. Truly, "we have not a high priest that can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need" (Heb. 4. 16).

When with my soul's eyes I thus behold the suffering and crucified Saviour as Love grieved unto death, I at the same time look into the very heart of God, the heart of grieved and suffering goodness. Where Christ is, God is. Such as Christ is, God is.

He that has seen and sees the Son has also seen and sees the Father. For to faith the two are one. The only begotten Son reflects the will and mind of God in a manner that is humanly apprehensible and at the same time is spiritually discerned as clearly as it is possible for men to perceive things eternal.

In my little Papias-fantasy (pp. 14-26) the kind reader has doubtless recognized back of the assumed mask the features of the writer of these lines, and there is no longer any use in concealing my identity—I gave expression to this thought by combining the appearance of the father in the parable of the prodigal son, that pearl of pearls, with that of the Crucified One.

Christian believers, who loved the person of the Saviour above all, often experienced a certain inner regret and anxiety in connection with this parable, in spite of its wonderful riches. There was something lacking, one felt, and more so as the parable in other respects was glorious and comforting. To be sure, this feeling was seldom expressed. But I am nevertheless quite certain

that my description of that which was not expressed is not a figment of my own imagination. What was lacking? The Saviour. It appeared as though there were no place in that parable for Him. And yet the story seemed to picture precisely the religious experience wherein He was felt to be most indispensable, namely, the experience of the forgiveness of sins.

Not without reason it may be said that the point of application in the parable is not the forgiving of the prodigal son on the part of the father. The whole story finally issues in the elder brother's displeasure at the undeserved goodness shown to his unfortunate brother. One need not have heard very many of our usual sermons on the text of the prodigal son (the title usually given the parable) in order to have noticed how this main point of the parable is often neglected.

One may, and not without justification, underscore the fact that the parable is not intended to be an essentially complete, though figurative, description of how God forgives the sins of the lost children of men.

But I still believe that there must be quite a few in the depth of whose hearts a painful sting nevertheless remains.

Though I have no desire to seek by argument to win others over to my way of thinking, I am of the opinion that the elder disciple in the fictitious legend of Papias saw aright when he recognized in the outstretched arms of the Crucified One the open arms of the father in the parable, yes, became aware of the heavenly Father Himself in the agony of grief "spreading out his hands . . . unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good" (Is. 62. 2).

For me, the Father in heaven and the father in the freely fashioned parable, and Jesus Christ in His historical reality are fused into one single figure, whose essential and eternal import is love—aggrieved, forgiving love.

On page 120, I intimated that there is a connection between forgiving, on the one hand, and grief and suffering, on the other. Let us now try to develop this thought further with reference to its significance for our conception of the atonement.

In forgiveness of the most noble type there is, I believe, an element of suffering. The one who forgives in the noblest sense of the word is most painfully conscious of the debt which he forgives. If it were merely something he could excuse, he would not suffer. But he sees the act of the other as real sin, as grave transgression. Therefore he must suffer and be vexed in his righteous soul (cf. 2 Pet. 2. 8).

The thing that pains him most is not that he has been wronged. This he is willing to overlook, this he is eager to excuse with all the inventiveness of love. But he grieves and agonizes because of the perversity of heart and will that confronts him in inescapable reality. Therein the evil lies.

Nor does he suffer merely because of the evil as such. There is an added pain of no less intensity because of the fact that this particular person is evil, that evil has gained power over him and made him its captive and slave. This also implies that in his love he enters under the other's misfortune. He grieves over the lost and wretched condition of the other. He thereby lays the burden

of the other upon himself—and no burden is so heavy as sin—and bears it on his bleeding shoulder. The suffering in one who not only sympathizes with but actually assumes the debt of another, with as much earnestness and actuality as if it were his own, may indeed with reason be called a “vicarious” suffering.

But we may find also a third element in our analysis of the suffering of forgiving love. Grieved love bears the other’s burden also in the sense that, with a sincere heart, it pities him and suffers with him in the penitential agony which sin brings upon him when he comes to himself and becomes conscious of his wrongdoing.

If I am not mistaken, there is something of this in what has here been spoken of as suffering love, more especially in its loftiest manifestation, forgiveness. I am of the opinion that there is *something* of this in all human forgiving, if genuine. But I do not think it wrong to use this analogy from our human relationships even when we think and speak of the nature of divine forgiveness.

The Old Testament Jahveh laments and declares:

“Thou hast burdened me with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am he that blot-teth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins” (Is. 43. 24, 25).

I pass by the question of the exact significance of these words from a historical-exegetical point of view and restrict myself, as I have sometimes done before, to a purely meditative consideration. God’s forgiveness is here mentioned in immediate connection with the “work” (the word used in the Swedish Bible), the “burden” and “weariness” which Israel’s sin and iniquity has caused Him. God Himself becomes the One who labors and is heavy laden (Mt. 11. 28), and the burden under which He sighs is our sins. But the possibility of forgiveness lies in the very fact that He voluntarily subjects Himself to “weariness” and “labor” for our sake, and does not in exalted peace leave us to our fate.

The idea of God as He who “carries”

His people is familiar to us from the Old Testament (e.g., Ex. 19. 44; Dt. 1. 31; Is. 46. 4). It seeks to visualize God's tender and faithful care for the chosen people. Even if it implies the taking of a liberty, as it surely does, we may think also of God's forgiving grief, which carries and thereby takes away our heaviest burden, our debt, as we meditate on and apply to ourselves the words of the Psalmist:

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden, even the God who is our salvation" (Ps. 68. 19).

Also when we sing in P. O. Nyström's beautiful prayer hymn:

"I know that in Thy bosom
My sorrows Thou dost bear."

(Sw. Ps. 260: 4.)

The imagery of "weariness," "labor," and "burden" merely gives other and concrete expression to the aspect of suffering in divine love when directed toward a lost humanity, toward you and me as sinners. But these images may, it appears to me, have value in visualizing my proposition, which possibly seems artificial and unreal.

I maintain that the acme as well as the dissolution of suffering lies in forgiveness. This may be illustrated, though not proved, by the analogy of a man who carries a burden. He grows more tired with every passing moment. But usually he probably feels his burden weighing most heavily on his shoulder when he reaches his goal and lays it down.

As a sinner, I can not be satisfied with anything less than God's forgiveness. Without it I can not be saved. The agony of my spirit is not stilled if God "excuses," or "overlooks," or "has patience with" the wrong I have done or the good I have omitted to do. Even if we occasionally use the latter expressions along with others, we understand them, in the final analysis, as implying the first, namely, forgiveness. In a couple of remarkable New Testament passages, namely, Rom. 3. 25, and Acts 17. 30, God is spoken of as "passing over" or "overlooking" (the Greek expressions in the two passages are different, but mean virtually the same) the sins of men in past ages. But

now, since the new age has come, God forgives—or judges.

Forgiveness of sins, *remissio peccatorum*, no gift can be more precious to the receiver—yet no less precious to the Giver. Ever since the earliest days of the Church, Christian believers have been wont to express the matter by saying: without sacrifice, no atonement, no forgiveness. This theme has been varied in numberless ways. It has never become silent, nor shall it ever be.

A wealth of meaning lies in the word about “the sacrifice,” far more than most people realize. I shall, however, take note of only the most common shade of meaning by rewriting the matter in this way: It has “cost” God something to forgive us. God “gave,” “delivered up” (Jn. 3. 16; Rom. 8. 32) His own Son, the only begotten One—and in the Son, Himself. He “spared not” His Son (Rom. 8. 32)—and therefore not Himself.

The Father sacrificing His only Son! Immediately there rises before our inner vision the picture of the patriarch who stands ready to thrust the knife into the

breast of his only and beloved son (Gen. 22. 10), and who must have felt in that moment as if he were about to pierce his own heart, even though the Old Testament text in its lapidary brevity says nothing about this. If outwardly cool and calm, inwardly he must have been violently stirred.

It can scarcely surprise us that Christians have often felt called upon to find in the Old Testament story of the offering of Isaac by Abraham a “prototype,” a “similitude,” a “shadow” of the painful delivering up of His only begotten Son by the heavenly Father. Tertullian, the church father, was the first to use this juxtaposition, as far as I have been able to ascertain (*Againt Marcion*, III, 18—*Against the Jews*, 10). Since that time, to religious writers it has belonged to the fixed tradition. I shall mention only a few well known names, namely, M. F. Roos, J. Gezelius, and P. Fjellstedt. One finds it in the familiar Bible commentaries of the last two. And to add a name from the present day, I can mention the prominent Old Testament exegete, C. F. Burney, whose recent work, “The Gospel

in the Old Testament," lies before me. (See pp. 21, 22.) Incidentally, Burney reminds us (p. 15) that in the *lectionarium* of his Church this text has been assigned to be read on Good Friday morning.

When we say that God "delivers up," "offers up" His Son, there lies in these words precisely that which I have here wished to describe with the expression "grieved and suffering love," though the choice of words and images is another. For this "giving," "delivering up" implies the very opposite of an unfeeling surrender. On the contrary, the Father's heart is gripped with the most intense anguish when He delivers up His only begotten Son. Grieved love has here reached its absolute maximum. A further increase is unthinkable.

And I dare cherish the hope that you, my dear reader, whatever may be your opinion of my thoughts in other respects, will agree that it is impossible to give up the thought of such a suffering on God's part, if indeed the ancient Christian confession concerning God's "delivering up" of the only begotten Son has any content or meaning for you.

This expression emphasizes especially the active element in the grieved love of God. God's sorrow is no passivity, no brooding, no hidden divine *internum*. He has Himself removed the veil from this mystery in a matchless human life and its vicissitudes. In the cross God reveals the grief of His heart, unto atonement and forgiveness.

"Thy boundless might and glory
Thou didst resign,
O Love divine,
That conquerest in dying."

(Sw. Ps. 89: 3.)

"Unto atonement *and* forgiveness." Yes, for me, as you may have noticed before, the two words have essentially the very same meaning. And I believe I have very good reasons for my assertion that even the New Testament writers had the same conception. But if anyone be of a different mind, I shall not argue with him about it.

God atoned and atones, forgave and forgives, by delivering up His Son—and in the Son, Himself—by letting the Son suffer—and Himself suffer in Him. "This is a hard

saying; who can hear it?" (Jn. 6. 60.) You may direct this saying against me.

When one stands before the cross, as you and I are doing now, it does not behoove us to play with sharp words, even as the Roman soldiers played with their dice on Good Friday. You wrong me, I assure you, if you see in my words any thoughtless, ostentatious exaggeration.

I am of the conviction that the Father suffers in the Son. Just as in the earthly life of Jesus I see the Father revealed, so that at every point where I see something of the mind and will of Jesus I am sure that I there also see the mind and will of God, that in Jesus I always meet God, so I must—whether I will it or not, I was about to say—do the same at the cross.

I can think and speak of the Son as "sent" and "given" by the Father, and this with respect to the whole earthly life of the Son, from its beginning all the way to its bloody end. But I can also use, as of equal value, the conception of John just mentioned, namely, that the Father is in the Son, and this at every point in the Son's life without

exception. For my part, I find it impossible to make an exception of the death on the cross and to hold that in this case the Son should be merely the object of the Father's action, so that God would here only be dealing with the Son and not be in Him. "I in thee, and thou in me" is an expression of the Johannine Christ which holds true from the crib in Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, for the Lord's life and death are inseparably connected.

But the death of Jesus is the highest point in His life. His love appears in its most overwhelming majesty, in its most active power, when it appears as the love that suffers unto death. In this way the cross becomes, as the ancients said, *speculum patris aeterni*, a mirror, a reflection of the Father (cf. Heb. 1. 3). The crown of thorns which the Crucified bears becomes to the eye of faith the kingly crown of the Most Exalted, even as the pious art of bygone days occasionally pictured the Suffering One in kingly attire. The halo befits "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2. 8).

Not as proof of the validity of this belief,

that the Father suffers in the Son, but as an evidence that it by no means implies anything new, even though it is not usually expressed in the accentuated manner in which I have taken the liberty to use, I shall remind you of a couple of Bible passages and of a doctrine that is traditional among us.

I refer first to a passage quoted before (p. 145), namely, Is. 43. 24, 25. This word from Isaiah has from ancient times been interpreted as applying to the Messiah. Even in the early Church it was understood as referring to the sufferings of Jesus. In this case, as in so many similar ones, Christ has been given the place of Jahveh. I have no occasion to dwell on the historical-exegetical phase of this procedure. But the old exposition is, however, an unequivocal evidence of how near the Son was thought to be to the Father even in His suffering.

A certain emphasis in the description in The Acts of Paul's farewell address to the elders in Ephesus is of particular interest in connection with our question. Paul reminds the elders that they were made overseers or "bishops, to feed the church of

God which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20. 28), i.e., with God's own blood. Thus it is rendered in our new translation. And it can scarcely be denied that the Greek text used by the Swedish translators has much that speaks in its favor. But there are others who prefer a dissenting Greek version, which reads, "the church of the Lord"; the blood then becomes that of the Lord, i.e., Christ's, not God's. I need not sit as judge and decide which version is the older. In either case, it is evident that the early Christians spoke of the suffering of the Lord as that of God.

The orthodox dogmatic tradition also offers a point of contact. According to it, the agonizing cry of Jesus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt. 27. 46; Mk. 15. 34), is conceived of as implying a real abandonment on the part of God, in and during which the Saviour endured in a few hours the tortures of damnation which all men had deserved to suffer through an eternity of eternities. Some have sought to explain the possibility of the Lord's suffering such abysmal torment and

agony by emphasizing that the One who suffers here is God.

The last three expressions or conceptions referred to by no means reflect faithfully the view I venture to hold concerning the mystery of the atonement. Anyone who has cared to read the preceding pages with some attention will surely have observed this. I have merely wished to indicate what I conceive to be a few points of contact in the traditional conceptions of the Church.

God suffers. This conception implies a paradox unacceptable to one's intellect, as has been repeatedly said. It would assuredly not have arisen in any human heart if it had not clothed itself in human form. But in Jesus Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2. 9). Thus the incarnate Sufferer assumes the very expression of Divine Passion. He becomes for us, in the highest sense, "the Lamb of God." He takes upon Himself, bears, and expresses all the grief of God's love. The "man of sorrows" (Is. 53. 3) becomes the suffering God, grieved unto death, and the heavenly

Father becomes the eternally blessed God. But the two are one.

We should never have understood God's suffering grief if we had not met it in the human form of Jesus Christ, the Crucified. Let me now add a thought which you, my dear reader, may consider entirely too bold. But if you have had patience with my "foolishness" so far, perhaps you will bear with me in one more outbreak.

God's sorrow and suffering over sin are met in human form even in myself. A Christian who repents and grieves over his sin knows full well that this anguish of repentance is not ultimately of his own doing, but is the work of God Himself and of His Spirit. But is this to be thought of merely according to the analogy of a gift which God gives, as something which God extends to us and we simply take as a gift? Does not God give Himself in the gift? Is it not just this that confers upon the gift its incomparable value?

Paul speaks a profound word about our prayer as a praying of the Spirit, God Himself praying in us (Rom. 8. 26). Is not this

true also as applied to our grief over our sins? Is it not God's own Spirit within us that groans and suffers for us, with us, in us?

Abba, Father. Thou in me, and I in Thee.
Yea, Amen.

THE TIME has now come to say farewell, and, noble reader, we must part. It would be only proper if I should first give you an opportunity to express what you may have on your mind, since I alone have had my say; but I hope you have noticed my honest attempts throughout to take into account objections of various kinds that may be raised against the character of these meditations.

However, the written word does not allow such a mutual exchange of thoughts. Therein lies its decided inferiority to the *viva vox*, the living word of personal intercourse.

The only thing now left for me to do is to refer again to the watch-word previously quoted, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, i.e., what makes for growth of my inner life should be the content of my religious faith. Only the living reality itself can judge of the weight and value of a theological formula or a religious thought.

Finally, this one thing. I am of course fully aware that my conception of the subject here treated is decidedly Christocentric. But this corresponds to the experience of my own life, whatever that may be worth in the opinion of others. It has become more and more Christocentric year by year. And I can not see a weakness in that which has been my only strength, has given me life and energy, has sustained me in want and distress, *terrores et angustiae*. The Son draws me to the Father, but it is the Father who in turn draws me to the Son. This is for me eternal life, an everlasting harmony.

E'en though every tree and grass on the earth
Had voice and a tongue all ringing,
Though beasts and the birds with beauty and mirth
Like angels in heaven were singing,
They never our Saviour, the Son of God,
Could praise in adequate measure.

(Sw. Ps. 424: 4.)



* 2. 1939/556